

SMILE, THE COPS ARE WATCHING • UNION YES, WAR NO

In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

April 14, 2003

Bush vs. the World

Why Washington can't
go it alone

By Ian Williams



\$2.95 Canada \$4.50



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In These Times (ISSN 0160-5992) is published biweekly by the Institute for Public Affairs, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647. Periodicals postage paid at Chicago, IL and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *In These Times*, 308 E. Hitt St., Mt. Morris, IL 61054. This issue (Vol. 27, No. 10) went to press on March 14 for newsstand sales April 1 to April 14, 2003.

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Subscriptions are \$36.95 a year (\$59 for institutions; \$61.95 Canada; \$75.95 overseas). For **subscription questions, address changes and back issues** call (800) 827-0270.

Editorial correspondence and letters should be sent to: 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647. Phone: (773) 772-0100. Fax: (773) 772-4180. E-mail: itt@inthesetimes.com.

Complete issues and volumes of *In These Times* are available from Bell and Howell, Ann Arbor, MI. *In These Times* is indexed in the Alternative Press Index and the Left Index. Newsstand circulation through the IPA International Sales Cooperative at (415) 643-0161, or info@bigtoppubs.com.



Editorial

Spies Like Us

In its drive to sell the world on its plans for war with Iraq, the Bush administration has deployed its intelligence agencies to spy on friendly governments and to doctor evidence to prove Iraqi wrongdoing.

On January 31, Frank Koza, a National Security Agency official, sent a "Top Secret" memo to NSA agents and British intelligence, informing them that the NSA is spying on U.N. Security Council members "for insights as to how membership is reacting to the on-going debate." In that memo, leaked to the *Observer* of London, Koza wrote that NSA is monitoring all communications of "UN Security Council members (minus US and GBR of course)."

Specifically, Koza asks his agents to use their electronic surveillance "product lines"—bugging phone lines in homes and offices and monitoring e-mail—to collect information on Security Council members, including their "plans to vote on any related resolutions, what related policies/negotiating position they may be considering, alliances/dependencies, etc.—the whole gamut of information that could give U.S. policy makers an edge in obtaining results favorable to U.S. goals or to head off surprises."

Such spying is not without recent precedent. As was revealed in 1999, the Clinton administration used the U.N. inspection team as a cover for spying on Iraq. The *Boston Globe* characterized it as "an ambitious spying operation designed to penetrate Iraq's intelligence apparatus and track the movement of Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein."

When evidence of Iraq's evil intentions cannot be found, it is invented. U.N. nuclear weapons inspector Mohamed El Baradei has reported that documents indicating that Iraq was trying to buy uranium from Niger were forged. Further, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has concluded that the high-strength aluminum tubes that Iraq has tried to import over the past two years were intended for Iraq's artillery rocket program, rather than, as the Bush administration claims, a secret Iraqi program to make enriched uranium.

And let's not forget the "intelligence" report released in January by Tony Blair, and later trumpeted by Colin Powell before the U.N. Security Council, a report that was lifted verbatim from previously pub-

lished articles which were then edited to sound scarier.

Glen Rangwala, the Cambridge University analyst who exposed that deception, has now caught Powell in another lie. This one concerns what the administration learned from Hussein Kamel, the Iraqi weapons chief who defected in August 1995. In the past six months, the administration has repeatedly cited the crates of evidence Kamel turned over as proof that Iraq has not accounted for all its weapons of mass destruction.

In late February, Rangwala received a transcript of a three-hour debriefing of Kamel, who was Saddam Hussein's son-in-law, by IAEA and UNSCOM inspectors. In that interview, Kamel said: "I ordered destruction of all chemical weapons. All weapons—biological, chemical, missile, nuclear were destroyed."

That destruction, he said, took place "after visits of inspection teams. You have an important role in Iraq with this. You should not underestimate yourself. You are very effective in Iraq." He added, "I made the decision to disclose everything so that Iraq could return to normal." (When Kamel returned to Iraq in 1996, Saddam had him assassinated.)

News of this transcript first surfaced in late February in the "Periscope" section of

Kamel is cited as providing proof that Iraq poses a clear and present danger, when he did the opposite.

Newsweek, where John Barry reported that Kamel told the CIA and British intelligence the same story. Barry writes that Kamel's statement was "hushed up by the U.N. inspectors" to "bluff Saddam into disclosing still more."

As *In These Times* went to press, however, this story has been largely ignored by the national media. It is particularly odd that the *New York Times* has overlooked it, since Kamel has been cited four times on the *Times* op-ed page by supporters of war as providing proof that Iraq poses a clear and present danger, when in fact he did exactly the opposite.

So what do we have? An administration that, having failed to make a case for war against Iraq, sinks to lies and subterfuge. A national media that, having been taken in, lacks the wherewithal to tell it like it is.

—Joel Bleifuss

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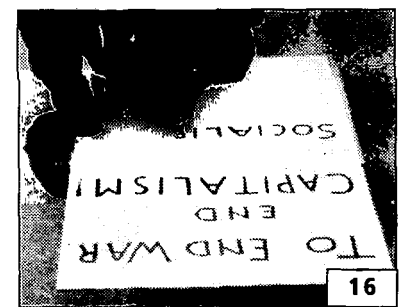
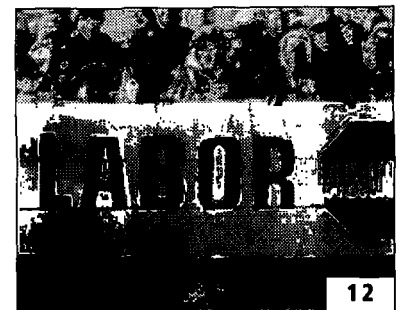
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Placing the Blame

In response to Joy Rose's charges of anti-Semitism printed on the March 17 letters page, what I actually said in my article was: "This war will be fought because these neo-conservatives desire to make the Middle East safe not for democracy, but for Israeli hegemony. ... September 11 [allowed Israel] to draft the United States to help fight Israel's enemies" ("Attack Iraq" February 17).

Briefly, I do not see how talking about Israeli hegemony has anything to do with anti-Semitism. Israel is a state like any other. (Wasn't that the Zionist ideal?) It happens to be the most powerful one in its region, and its powerful neocon friends in Washington are helping it strengthen its strategic dominance. I see nothing anti-Semitic in describing that as hegemony, unless any description of Israel that is displeasing to certain people invites that charge, in which case they are misusing and cheapening the term beyond recognition.

At www.israeleconomy.org/strat1.htm, readers can sample the unexpurgated views of some of these powerful neocon friends of Israel (Richard Perle, Douglas Feith, David Wurmser: all in senior positions in the Bush administration today), written in 1996 as policy recommendations for incoming Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu.

Rashid Khalidi
Chicago

Contending with Korea

After 50 years, it is time for the Korean War—which cost the Korean people millions of lives and the United States more than 50,000—to be brought to an end, with a formal peace treaty between North Korea and the United States. Kevin Kim's article ("Understanding North Korea," March 17) shows what needs to be done by the United States to bring about this closure. Given the enormous asymmetry of power and resources between the two countries, and the responsibility the current U.S. administration bears for the present impasse, the initiative will have to come from Washington.

Of course, there will be costs to the Bush administration in taking this initiative. It would not be popular with the fundamentalist right wing of the Republican Party, and it would undermine much of the rationale for the so-called missile-defense boondoggle. But in the long term, it would probably be beneficial to the U.S. strategic interest in hindering East Asian domination by a single,

non-U.S. power. A peace treaty and a non-aggression pact between the North and the United States would open the way to a reunification of Korea, which would certainly further this end. But the present U.S. administration seems to believe that it can dominate the world on its own—or with the aid of faithful poodles like Tony Blair—and thus has other priorities.

M. Henri Day
Molde, Norway

Sounds like Kevin Kim works for Kim Jong Il. The article suggests that establishing normalized relations with North Korea is a good thing. How anyone can take such a sympathetic view of a regime that systematically brutalizes and lies to its people baffles me. "If Bush really cares about Kim Jong Il's starving people ..." How about Kim Jong Il caring about Kim Jong Il's starving people instead of expending the country's scant resources on military pursuits?

The tone of the article suggests that blame for the current crisis falls entirely on congressional Republicans and the current administration. Yes, the administration is taking a hard line against North Korea. But look what good a soft line did in 1994. Kim doesn't entertain the idea that the untrustworthy North Korea never intended to abide by its obligation. Kim seems to forget that the only reason North Korea even got the Agreed Framework was by threatening the production of nuclear weapons—not

exactly conducive to peace and stability on the peninsula.

Eric Cha
Via the Internet

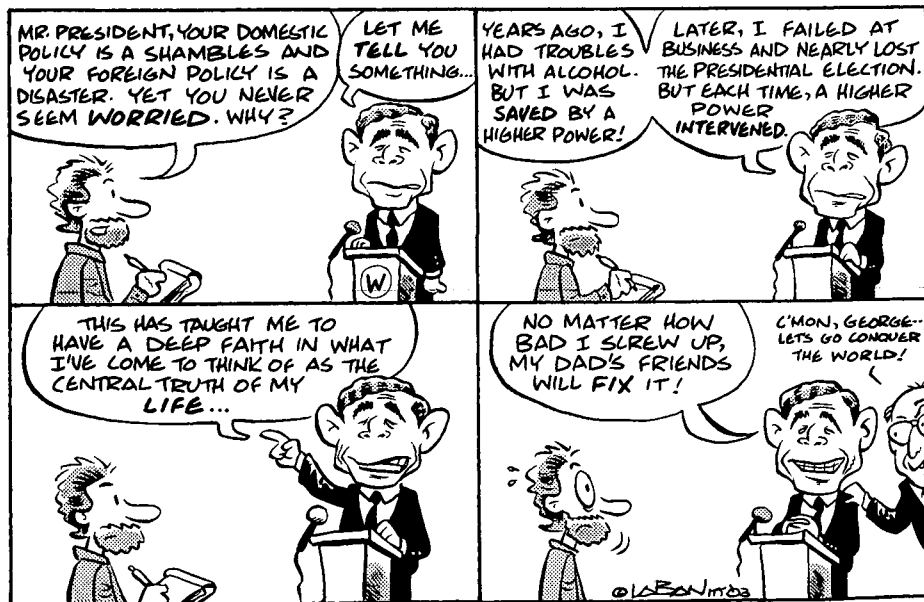
Kevin Kim responds: Sounds like Cha works for George W. Bush. Moralizing fundamentalists like Cha turn the human rights regime into a blame game where there are no clear winners or losers. Certainly the North Koreans, like Republicans and Bush officials, bear responsibility for past actions. But the crux of the crisis is the mutual breakdown of a bilateral accord that must be reworked through negotiations securing more comprehensive curbs on North Korea's nuclear and missile programs in return for diplomatic recognition and security assurances long reneged on by the United States.

There's nothing wrong with a hard-line approach, but Bush's self-righteous version ruling out any kind of one-on-one talks with North Korea as "reward" for "bad behavior" has the South Korean stock market crashing, the North gearing up for war, and shuns the advice of our major allies—not exactly conducive to peace and stability on the peninsula.

Correction

In "Understanding North Korea" (March 17), Katharine Moon should have been identified as a former Clinton State Department staff member in the Office of International Women's Issues. Moon's comment was made in the context of last year's accident near the DMZ, in which two Korean girls were killed by a U.S. military vehicle.

Terry LaBan



Candid Camera

Smile, the cops are watching

By Ryan Singel

While many Americans find themselves obsessed with watching reality TV, they increasingly—and unknowingly—may be caught on the government's hidden cameras. Police departments across the country are using or considering closed-circuit surveillance cameras to watch over public spaces—including at protests and rallies.

Some cameras, like those that monitor the front doors of a court building, are not much more invasive than the cameras at ATMs and convenience stores. In Baltimore, for instance, a nonprofit group called Downtown Partnership controls 64 marked cameras that monitor select city blocks in an attempt to cut down on street crime.

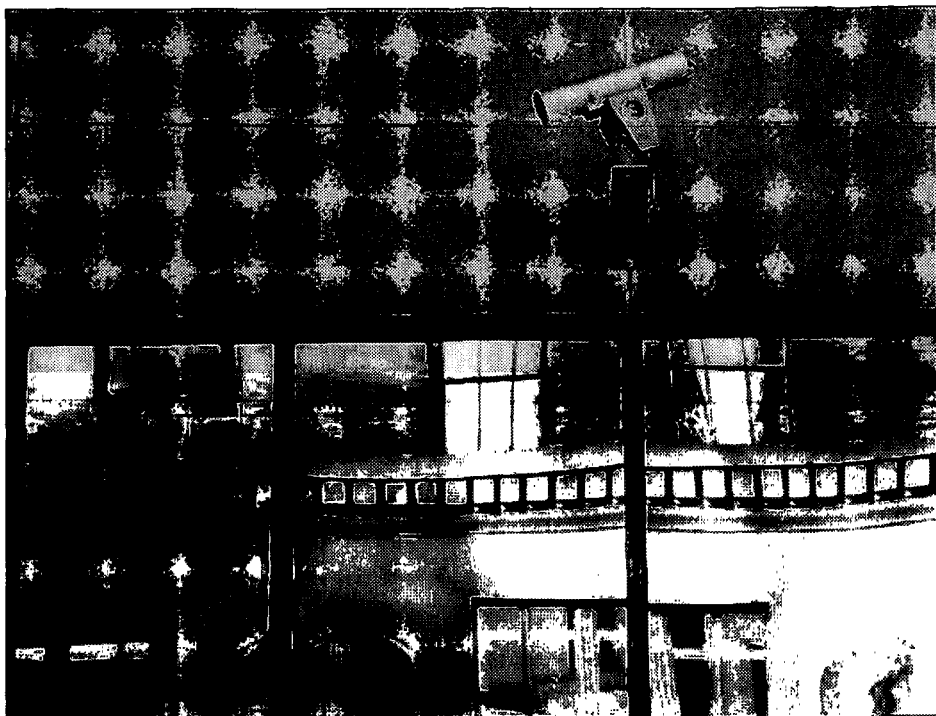
A spokesman for the group dismisses privacy concerns, saying the cameras aren't monitored, police only view footage after a crime is reported, and footage is deleted after seven days. Still, the group is looking to add cameras in a new entertainment district in the city.

Other systems are far more ominous and have received much more attention, even when ineffective. Amid national controversy, Tampa, Florida, installed cameras and facial recognition software in June 2001 to catch criminal offenders and run-aways. The city discontinued the system after a year, never having matched a single person to a mug shot in the database.

The same technology combination was put in play during the 2002 Super Bowl in Tampa, where it scanned the crowd for felons and "terrorists." But the system was deemed ineffective and quietly benched before this year's game.

Now, the fight over surveillance has moved to the nation's capital. Over the past two years, without telling the City Council, Washington police have spent millions on a sophisticated surveillance camera system that uses hidden, high-resolution, remote-control cameras and wireless Internet services. The system shares a sophisticated command center with the Secret Service and the FBI.

The cameras can zoom in on virtually any house or backyard in the downtown



SPENCER PLATT / GETTY

Police are advocating surveillance cameras on city streets—and at protests.

area and were first tested in April 2000, when they monitored protesters at anti-globalization marches. Agents from the Army's Intelligence and Security Command aided the department's surveillance of the protests, details of which were distributed to other federal and local agencies through the federally funded Regional Information Sharing System (RISS), according to *Intelligence Newsletter*.

The City Council, angry with the police for not getting approval for the project, adopted a resolution in November 2001 that limited use of the cameras. The resolution requires public notification before cameras are turned on, orders police to delete footage after two weeks, and bans audio recording and racial profiling.

However, the American Civil Liberties Union, which has proposed an alternate bill, had hoped the resolution would fail. "The regulations legitimize the use of cameras for general video surveillance," says Stephen Block, legislative counsel for the ACLU. "This usage is very different from red light cameras or narrowly focused cameras used for criminal investigations."

Police used the cameras to search for the D.C. snipers in October and at the September IMF/World Bank protests, a January pro-life protest and the huge January and

February anti-war protests. The cameras were on for most of February in response to the heightened terrorist alert, and will also be used at Washington's March 15 anti-war march. Police there say they generally only monitor, not record, camera feeds.

Both Police Chief Charles Ramsey—known for authorizing pre-emptive arrests of anti-globalization activists—and Mayor Anthony Williams have publicly expressed their intention to emulate London, where the average citizen is caught on camera 500 times a day.

London has an estimated 150,000 public cameras, which it uses, in part, to levy an approximately \$8 charge on all cars entering the city center. However, crime rates have gone up in England, despite the 2.5 million cameras nationwide.

England started installing the cameras in the early '90s in response to Irish Republican Army terrorist bombings, and the cameras have been largely uncontroversial there. "There is a great deal of safety and security that people feel [in London]," Ramsey told the *Washington Times*. "All we're trying to reach here in the District is that same sense of safety and security."

Since public controversy erupted over the D.C. system, Ramsey has backed off his ambitious plans. But a white paper,

prepared by the system's designer, reveals the early goals of the program. "Eventually, the Washington system will bring together cameras operated by different jurisdictions across the metropolitan area to include transportation, schools and potentially private security sources," the paper says. "Law enforcement officials will be able to view these images at the command center and broadcast the video to computer units already installed in most of the city's 1,000 patrol cars."

Police shouldn't be surprised at the backlash against security cameras. Last March, the ACLU revealed that Denver Police had been spying and keeping detailed files on protesters for years. The dossiers include names, addresses, biographies and license plate numbers of those who attended peaceful rallies. The files even identify the Quakers as a "criminal extremist" group.

Police in Worcester, Massachusetts, were caught systematically photographing protesters, one by one, at a peace rally in October 2000, on the day the United States started bombing in Afghanistan. It was later revealed that the department

had been photographing participants at rallies for years.

Privacy groups say they are trying to prevent the government from revisiting the widespread surveillance abuses of the '60s and '70s as chronicled in the congressional Church Report, which disclosed that the FBI had a list of 26,000 people to be detained in the event of a national emergency.

Johnny Barnes, executive director of the Washington ACLU, worries just as much about the self-imposed censorship that cameras can create, especially in D.C. "We don't know how many people won't exercise their First Amendment rights because they are afraid of surveillance," Barnes says.

The City Council, which held extensive hearings on the cameras in December, will return to the issue in coming months.

The ACLU argues that if camera surveillance takes hold in our nation's capital, proponents of cameras will use it as a model for the rest of the country. Says Barnes: "We ran from a British-style system in 1776, and we should run from it now." ■

Rigged Justice

Supreme Court rules against stacking juries with whites

By David Lindorff

In a powerful 8-to-1 decision in late February, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that an appeals court had made it unduly hard for an African-American Texas Death Row inmate to get a hearing on a claim his jury had been unconstitutionally purged of blacks.

The ruling in the case of Thomas Miller-El, which technically sends the case back to the 5th Circuit, is likely to reverberate through district and appellate courts across the country—especially in states like Texas and Pennsylvania, where local prosecutors have already been accused of stacking juries with whites in capital cases. On March 4, a study commissioned by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court called for a moratorium on executions in that state because of concerns about a disproportionate number of minorities on Death Row. One finding: Prosecutors were improperly barring black jurors in cases involving black defendants.

Miller-El would appear to be no saint. He stands convicted of first-degree murder for the ruthless 1985 execution of a Holiday Inn employee, whom he and two accomplices bound and gagged on the floor during a botched robbery. He was sentenced to death in 1986, along with his wife, Dorothy, who was one of his accomplices.

At his trial, Miller-El's attorneys had protested what they said was the prosecution's attempt to remove nearly all blacks from his jury. Of 11 black jurors who had confirmed they would be able to vote for a death penalty, the prosecution barred 10 using so-called peremptory challenges—challenges for which no reason has to be given. The only black person the prosecution accepted had told the court he believed that with murderers, the state should "pour honey on them and stake them out over an ant bed."

The trial judge had rejected the defense claim of bias. Later state appellate courts likewise rejected claims of bias, saying the defense's claims of delib-

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW

AS WE FIGHT THE WAR FORMERLY KNOWN AS THE WAR ON TERROR, AMERICANS MUST DECIDE...

HOW FAR IS TOO FAR?

WOULD IT BOTHER YOU AT ALL IF THE HOUSE UN-AMERICAN ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE RECONVENED AFTER ALMOST FIFTY YEARS AND SET OUT ON ANOTHER HOLLYWOOD WITCH HUNT?

CAN'T SAY THAT IT WOULD! PATRIOTIC MOVIE STARS WOULD HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR!



WHAT IF NEW SEDITION LAWS WERE PASSED, MAKING CRITICISM OF THE GOVERNMENT A PUNISHABLE OFFENSE?

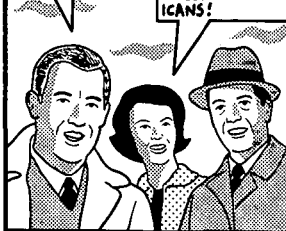
WELL, WE SHOULDN'T BE CRITICIZING THE GOVERNMENT AT A TIME LIKE THIS!

WE'RE EITHER WITH US--OR WE'RE AGAINST US!



WOULD IT MAKE YOU UNEASY IF THE FBI WERE TO REVIVE ITS COINTELPRO ACTIVITY AND ATTEMPT TO UNDERMINE DISSENT THROUGH A CAMPAIGN OF DIRTY TRICKS AND HARASSMENT?

WHY ON EARTH WOULD IT? IT'S NOT AS IF THEY'D BOTHER LOYAL AMERICANS!



WHAT IF AMERICAN CITIZENS OF MIDDLE EASTERN DESCENT WERE ROUNDED UP AND HELD IN INTERNMENT CAMPS FOR AN INDEFINITE DURATION?

IT WOULD BE UNFORTUNATE--BUT WE ARE AT WAR! I'M SURE THEY WOULD BE TREATED FAIRLY!



OR...WHAT IF THE ADMINISTRATION TRIED TO REDUCE OUR DEPENDENCE ON FOREIGN OIL BY ENACTING STRICT FUEL EFFICIENCY STANDARDS?

ARE YOU KIDDING?? THAT WOULD BE A BETRAYAL OF EVERYTHING THIS COUNTRY STANDS FOR!!



erate prosecution efforts to remove blacks were "unconvincing."

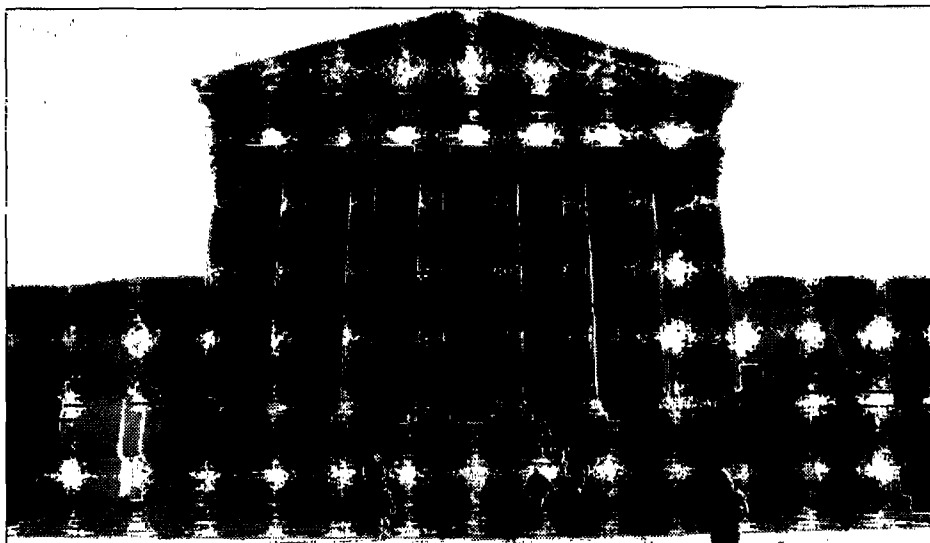
A *habeas* appeal to the federal district court also failed, with the judge declining to even consider the defense's evidence submitted by the defense of a long history of racially motivated strikes of black jurors by the Dallas district attorney's office. That evidence—a study by the *Dallas Morning News* of 100 cases between 1980 and 1986—showed the district attorney was routinely barring 90 percent of qualified blacks from juries.

The 5th Circuit Court of Appeals subsequently denied Miller-El's request for an appeal, saying he had not made a "substantial showing of denial of a constitutional right."

The Supreme Court, with Justice Clarence Thomas, its sole black member, alone in dissent, said that both the district court and the appeals court had erred in setting too high a bar of proof. The district court, the Supreme Court held, "did not give full consideration to the substantial evidence petitioner put forth in support of" racial bias in the jury selection, and instead "accepted without question the state court's evaluation" of the non-racial intent of the prosecution.

As for the Fifth Circuit, the justices said it had erred in requiring Miller-El to prove with "clear and convincing evidence" that the state courts had been "unreasonable."

"This," the High Court held, "was too demanding a standard."



MARK WILSON / GETTY

Racial bias in jury selection may now be easier to prove.

In the end, Miller-El may still fail to convince a three-judge panel that prosecutors deliberately removed blacks from his jury. On the other hand, the judges may heed the words of Justice Anthony Kennedy, who, writing for the majority, noted that 10 of the 14 peremptory challenges used by the prosecution had been to bar qualified African-Americans from Miller-El's panel. "Happenstance is unlikely to produce that disparity," Kennedy wrote.

The ruling may lead to appeals of older death penalty decisions. In Pennsylvania, academic studies found that during the two terms of District Attorney Ed Rendell (for-

mer Democratic Party national chairman and now governor of the state), from 1978 to 1986, city prosecutors removed qualified blacks from juries 58 percent of the time (compared to 22 percent for whites). A training video produced by Rendell's successor, Ronald Castille (later chief justice for the state's Supreme Court), taught new young prosecutors tricks on how to remove blacks from juries without getting caught.

Says death penalty expert Robert Brady, former chairman of the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty: "The Supreme Court ruling should have a remarkable system-wide effect." ■

After *Miller-El*, Mumia Abu-Jamal May Appeal

The Supreme Court's *Miller-El* ruling could be a big break for Mumia Abu-Jamal, the black Philadelphia journalist on Pennsylvania's Death Row since 1982.

The jury issues in the two murder cases are strikingly similar. In *Miller-El* the Dallas district attorney used peremptory challenges to eliminate 10 of 11 qualified black jurors. The high court said this was evidence of possible racism on the part of the district attorney—something that

has long been unconstitutional, but difficult to prove. In reaching its decision, the court's majority cited a Dallas newspaper's study of the district attorney's use of peremptory challenges between 1981 and 1986, which both the newspaper and the court said suggested a "culture" of racism in jury selection. Lower state and federal appeals courts had consistently—and, in the view of the Supreme Court, improperly—barred this evidence from consideration.

Abu-Jamal prosecutor Joseph McGill similarly used peremptory challenges to eliminate 11 of 15 possible black jurors, resulting in a jury of nine whites and three blacks. Just over a year ago, a federal judge refused to consider several academic studies submitted by Abu-Jamal's defense documenting a history of race-based jury selection by McGill and by the district attorney's office as a whole during the 1978 to 1986 tenure of then District Attorney Ed Rendell.

A prominent Philadelphia public defender who did not wish to be identified says the *Miller-El* decision will give the 3rd Circuit Court of Appeals no choice but to send the case back to a lower court, should Abu-Jamal's attorneys appeal. Adds Robert Bryan, the San Francisco death penalty expert recently hired by Abu-Jamal: "*Miller-El* is of great significance in what I will be eventually presenting federally on behalf of Mr. Abu-Jamal."—D.L.

Criminalizing the Homeless

Anti-begging ordinances proliferate across U.S.

By Paul Tolme

When the tourist town of Key West, Florida, banned begging near its cruise ship docks recently, local officials said what a growing number of other communities have said: Beggars and homeless people are bad for business.

"We can't afford to have panhandlers hassling tourists," says John Jones, assistant city manager in Key West, where thousands of cruise ship passengers arrive every year to shop and dine, bringing millions of dollars to the community. Now these panhandlers can be sentenced to 60



Trying to ban the homeless: Begging near busy intersections may soon be illegal.

days in jail and fined \$500.

Life on the streets is becoming increasingly difficult because of a growing trend among communities to outlaw begging.

At least 46 of the country's 50 largest cities now regulate begging, and far more smaller communities—from Boulder, Colorado, to Asheville, North Carolina—

The System Works 7.3

"Are you suggesting even if we find Mr. Amrine is actually innocent, he should be executed?"

"That's correct, your honor."

This choice bit of dialogue, reported in the *New York Times*, was exchanged by a Missouri Supreme Court justice and a state prosecutor. In the balance was the life of Joseph Amrine, a Missouri Death Row inmate convicted of killing a fellow prisoner while serving time for robbery, burglary and forgery. The witnesses for the prosecution, all jailbirds, have recanted their testimony, and Amrine's lawyers are trying to reopen his case. Assistant Attorney General Frank Jung was determined to deny them.

"To make sure we are clear on this," another justice asked, "if we find in a particular case that DNA evidence absolutely excludes somebody as the murderer, then we must execute them anyway if we can't find an underlying constitutional violation at their trial?"

Yep, that was exactly what Jung was saying.

Soapboxes at the Gap 3.2

Much like the budding democracies of the world, America's shopping malls are tentatively allowing new freedoms, such as the right of self-expression. It's a fitful process, and we should all be supportive. Crossgates Mall in upstate New York is the latest to experiment with *glasnost*.

Officials at the mall arrested Steve Downs for trespassing after he refused to remove a T-shirt he was wearing that bore an anti-war message. According to the *Albany Times-Union*, Downs' shirt said "Peace on Earth" on one side and "Give Peace a Chance" on the other.

Mall authorities dropped the charges against Downs after a hundred or so protesters showed up at the mall and occupied tables in the food court.

Today's Forecast: Top Secret 6.0

President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, internationally notorious for expropriating virtually all the land owned by white farmers in his country, has expelled foreign reporters and unleashed a reign of terror on opposing politicians. Now he is turning his dangerous temper on the troubled country's weathermen.

With no relief in sight to the drought that has plunged half of Zimbabwe into famine, according to *London's Telegraph*.

Mugabe has ordered the Meteorological Office to suppress long-range forecasts until his aides have purged them of bad news.

Wait for It! 4.2

The *Sunday Mirror* reports that a band of Iraqi soldiers scurried across the Kuwait border flying a white flag and tried to surrender to British troops. The Brits were testing their weapons, and the Iraqis took the noise as a sign that the big show had started. The gentlemen of the 16 Air Assault Brigade explained to the dozen Iraqis that surrender is not allowed before hostilities begin, and they had to go back to where they came from.



TERRY LABAN

are joining this movement. Some cities, such as Atlanta, have outlawed "aggressive" begging, while others such as Boston have banned it in certain public places. Other cities, like Austin, forbid begging anywhere in public.

"The number of anti-panhandling regulations has grown dramatically in the past few years," says Maria Foscarinis, executive director of the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty. Often, communities that adopt these bans are responding to complaints from downtown business owners who feel street people are displeasing to shoppers and tourists. "Businesses feel it creates an unpleasant environment for destitute people to be begging outside their doors," Foscarinis says.

While community leaders say they are reacting to a growing public nuisance, critics say these anti-begging ordinances are part of a national trend to criminalize homelessness. In addition to outlawing begging, communities have targeted homeless people through anti-loitering ordinances, regulations against urinating in parks, sleeping in public, sitting or lying down for too long, obstructing sidewalks and "loafing." Santa Monica, California, has not only outlawed begging; it is now a crime to hand out sandwiches to more than 150 street people in public without a permit.

This crackdown on individuals seeking money in the streets comes at a time of increasing need. Foscarinis and others cite the crumbling mental health network, a stingier federal welfare system, rising unemployment and the tanking economy as reasons for increased begging. A recent survey by the U.S. Conference of Mayors showed that, in 25 of 27 cities surveyed, demand for emergency food assistance rose by nearly one-fourth during 2001. Demand for emergency shelter also jumped in most cities, and advocates for the poor in New York City say there hasn't been such a rapid increase in need since the Great Depression.

There has been little national discussion about the proliferation of anti-begging measures because they are being implemented at the local level, one community at a time. "This whole movement has been under the radar," says Scott Cameron of the New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty in Albuquerque. In response, legal aid groups are gearing up to challenge some

of these ordinances as unconstitutional. Cameron and other advocates for the homeless recently formed a committee to review Albuquerque's treatment of the homeless, and they will try to document complaints that police selectively enforce local ordinances against the homeless.

Knowing that they risk treading on constitutionally protected free speech rights, communities have engaged in legal gymnastics to justify their anti-begging ordinances. Boulder recently outlawed the practice of standing in a road median with a sign, saying this activity is a safety hazard. Critics, however, point out there have been no accidents blamed on this activity, and say the issue of safety is a ruse. Boulder also outlawed asking for money within 10 feet of a shop or restaurant on the fashionable downtown Pearl Street walking mall. In addition, the city made it illegal to ask for money from

someone who has already been solicited in the past minute—a measure supporters say is aimed at safeguarding citizens from aggressive begging.

Portland, Oregon, has tried to keep homeless people from congregating downtown through an ordinance that allows police or other public servants to ban people from city parks for 30 days for violating any other ordinance, such as jaywalking or urinating in public. "People are being criminalized for sleeping outside, for going to the bathroom," says Edward Johnson, staff attorney with the Oregon Law Center. "These are things everyone must do."

But for the homeless, even these necessities are being outlawed. "When you take all these laws and ordinances across the country and look at their effect," says Johnson, "what they are doing is making it illegal to exist without a home. That's wrong." ■

Students for Peace



A student is handcuffed and chained to an armed forces recruitment center on March 5 in Philadelphia as part of a walkout organized by the National Youth and Student Peace Coalition. NYSPC's "Books not Bombs" campaign prompted 30,000 to 50,000 high school and college students to protest against military action in Iraq by walking out of class. — J. White

BY JOHN MALKIN

Catching Courage

For her work as co-founder of *Voices in the Wilderness*, a campaign to end the economic sanctions against the people of Iraq, Kathy Kelly has twice been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. *Voices in the Wilderness* delivers medicine and other supplies to Iraqis in defiance of U.S. government sanctions. As a result, it has faced tens of thousands of dollars in fines. John Malkin spoke with Kelly in January.

How many times have you been to Iraq, and what kind of supplies does *Voices in the Wilderness* deliver to the Iraqi people?

When I go this time, I think it will be my 18th trip. We've sent 58 delegations and assisted in getting quite a few more groups over there. There are about 15 people over there right now, called the Iraq Peace Team.

Mainly we bring medicines and medical relief supplies. Some school supplies. Medical textbooks on compact discs are quite valuable. What we bring is really a pittance in relation to the need. It is like a drop in the ocean. We are by no stretch of the imagination a medical relief group.

Since 1991, the U.S. government has bombed Iraq many times and has imposed sanctions on that country. One could say that the Gulf War really never ended. What have you witnessed and experienced during your visits to Iraq?

When I first started to go in 1996, there was nothing that could prepare me and others for what we were seeing inside the hospitals. One friend of mine likened it to a Death Row for infants. The conditions were so bad that no matter how much the staff would try to keep the hospital sanitary, the first thing that would hit you when you walked in the door was the terrible stench. You simply can't walk away from these situations of misery and poverty and children being punished to death. There are also many, many scenes of destruction and disaster that we visited, as a result of bombing.

What is the importance of nonviolence and nonviolent resistance?

The mentor experience I had in nonviolence came very much from people who had been part of the Freedom Rides, who were very

active in the civil rights movement, who became war tax refusers and went to jail frequently because of their beliefs. What I learned from them was the idea that courage is the ability to control your fear. There are many, many reasons, when you're involved in the kinds of struggles that nonviolent direct action places you within, to perhaps be fearful. But you begin to catch courage from other people. And you begin to catch courage even from some of the people you read about.

When you begin to become active further with nonviolence, there are certain novels that you can read, moving in the direction of following the precepts of people like Gandhi and King and Barbara Deming and Jesus and Dorothy Day. As Barbara Deming put it, "We are all part of one another." There is an opportunity to put one's life on alignment with the most cherished and deep beliefs that one holds. And that is a gift.

I think that people act nonviolently all of the time, but are just not aware of it.

I think that's certainly true. But I would assert there hasn't been that same demand that we use nonviolent means of negotiating and mediation and diplomacy, being willing to go the extra mile. Finding the carrot that would draw people to the negotiating table: We haven't been willing to use that so much in our foreign policy and in the political life.

What frightens me is that many people expect that whomever we elect is going to be somebody who is willing to use threat and force to preserve the status quo that Americans presently, by and large, enjoy. And that is a big, big danger. Because for people who look at the way we live and look at the way we treat people beyond our borders, who are so unfortunate as to find themselves on the "bad" or "wrong" side of U.S. policy, there is going to be a seething antagonism and resentment.

Here in this country, I can defy U.S. laws and I will be treated, by and large, with kid gloves. Even if I am put in prison, I am not going to experience the same kind of stigma or guilt that a lot of prisoners feel. But people beyond the United States, and people who are

poor or people of color within the United States, are not treated with kid gloves. In fact, there seems to be increasingly no mercy, very little forgiveness, within U.S. systems.

Do you think Iraq has weapons of mass destruction?

I don't know. I hope that the weapons inspection process will continue. I'd like to see the weapon inspection process continue all throughout Middle Eastern countries and in the United States as well. But does Iraq pose a threat to the United States, such that we have to act in self-defense? That is patently absurd. Even if Iraq did possess components for mass destruction, there



Kathy Kelly in Iraq.

is no way they would have the means for delivery. Even to their nearest neighbors.

Tell me about your plans to return to Iraq. Will *Voices in the Wilderness* remain if the U.S. government starts a full-fledged war?

I will be traveling back to Iraq to rejoin the Iraq Peace Team in a week and a half. It is our intention to be there and to be alongside people whom we've gotten to know. We simply can't imagine saying, "Well, it's getting a lot rougher now, we've got an access out of here, so we're going to take off now. Good luck." So, we will certainly stay. ■

This interview originally aired on micro-powered Free Radio Santa Cruz, 96.3 FM, in California. To read more from this interview, go to www.inthesetimes.com.

Resigning in Protest

John Brady Kiesling, a career diplomat who has served in U.S. embassies from Tel Aviv to Casablanca to Athens, sent the following letter of resignation to Secretary of State Colin Powell on February 27.

Dear Mr. Secretary: I am writing you to submit my resignation from the Foreign Service of the United States and from my position as Political Counselor in U.S. Embassy Athens, effective March 7. I do so with a heavy heart. The baggage of my upbringing included a felt obligation to give something back to my country. Service as a U.S. diplomat was a dream job. I was paid to understand foreign languages and cultures, to seek out diplomats, politicians, scholars and journalists, and to persuade them that U.S. interests and theirs fundamentally coincided. My faith in my country and its values was the most powerful weapon in my diplomatic arsenal.

It is inevitable that during 20 years with the State Department I would become more sophisticated and cynical about the narrow and selfish bureaucratic motives that sometimes shaped our policies. Human nature is what it is, and I was rewarded and promoted for understanding human nature. But until this administration, it had been possible to believe that by upholding the policies of my president I was also upholding the interests of the American people and the world. I believe it no longer.

The policies we are now asked to advance are incompatible not only with American values, but also with American interests. Our fervent pursuit of war with Iraq is driving us to squander the international legitimacy that has been America's most potent weapon of both offense and defense since the days of Woodrow Wilson. We have begun to dismantle the largest and most effective web of international relationships the world has ever known. Our current course will bring instability and danger, not security.

The sacrifice of global interests to domestic politics and to bureaucratic self-interest is nothing new, and it is certainly not a uniquely American problem. Still, we have not seen such systematic distortion of intelligence, such systematic

manipulation of American opinion, since the war in Vietnam. The September 11 tragedy left us stronger than before, rallying around us a vast international coalition to cooperate for the first time in a systematic way against the threat of terrorism. But rather than take credit for those successes and build on them, this administration has chosen to make terrorism a domestic political tool, enlisting a scattered and largely defeated al-Qaeda as its bureaucratic ally.

We spread disproportionate terror and confusion in the public mind, arbitrarily linking the unrelated problems of terrorism and Iraq. The result, and perhaps the motive, is to justify a vast misallocation of shrinking public wealth to the military and to weaken the safeguards that protect American citizens from the heavy hand of government. September 11 did not do as much damage to the fabric of American society as we seem determined to do to ourselves. Is the Russia of the late Romanovs really our model, a selfish, superstitious empire thrashing toward self-destruction in the name of a doomed status quo?

We should ask ourselves why we have failed to persuade more of the world that a war with Iraq is necessary. We have over the past two years done too much to assert to our world partners that narrow and mercenary U.S. interests override the cherished values of our partners. ... The model of Afghanistan is little comfort to allies wondering on what basis we plan to rebuild the Middle East, and in whose image and interests. Have we indeed become blind, as Russia is blind in Chechnya, as Israel is blind in the Occupied Territories, to our own advice, that overwhelming military power is not the answer to terrorism? After the shambles of postwar Iraq joins the shambles in Grozny and Ramallah, it will be a brave foreigner who forms ranks with Micronesia to follow where we lead.

We have a coalition still, a good one. The loyalty of many of our friends is impressive, a tribute to American moral capital built up over a century. But our closest allies are persuaded less that war is justified than that it would be perilous to allow the United States to drift into complete solipsism. Loyalty should be reciprocal. Why does our president condone the swaggering and contemptuous approach to our friends and allies this administration is fostering, including among its most senior officials. Has *oderint dum metuant* ["Let them hate us so long as they fear us"] really become our motto?

I urge you to listen to America's friends around the world. Even here in Greece, purported hotbed of European anti-Americanism, we have more and closer friends than the American newspaper reader can possibly imagine. ... When our friends are afraid of us rather than for us, it is time to worry. And now they are afraid. Who will tell them convincingly that the United States is as it was, a beacon of liberty, security and justice for the planet?

Mr. Secretary, I have enormous respect for your character and ability. You have preserved more international credibility

When our friends are afraid of us rather than for us, it is time to worry. And now they are afraid.

for us than our policy deserves, and salvaged something positive from the excesses of an ideological and self-serving administration. But your loyalty to the president goes too far. We are straining beyond its limits an international system we built with such toil and treasure, a web of laws, treaties, organizations and shared values that sets limits on our foes far more effectively than it ever constrained America's ability to defend its interests.

I am resigning because I have tried and failed to reconcile my conscience with my ability to represent the current U.S. administration. I have confidence that our democratic process is ultimately self-correcting, and hope that in a small way I can contribute from outside to shaping policies that better serve the security and prosperity of the American people and the world we share.

—John Brady Kiesling

THE FIRST TO

By Joel Bleifuss

Turd World Nations

MSNBC is under fire for giving radio schlock jock Michael Savage a weekly television program, *The Savage Nation*.

Here's a sampling of Savage opinion:

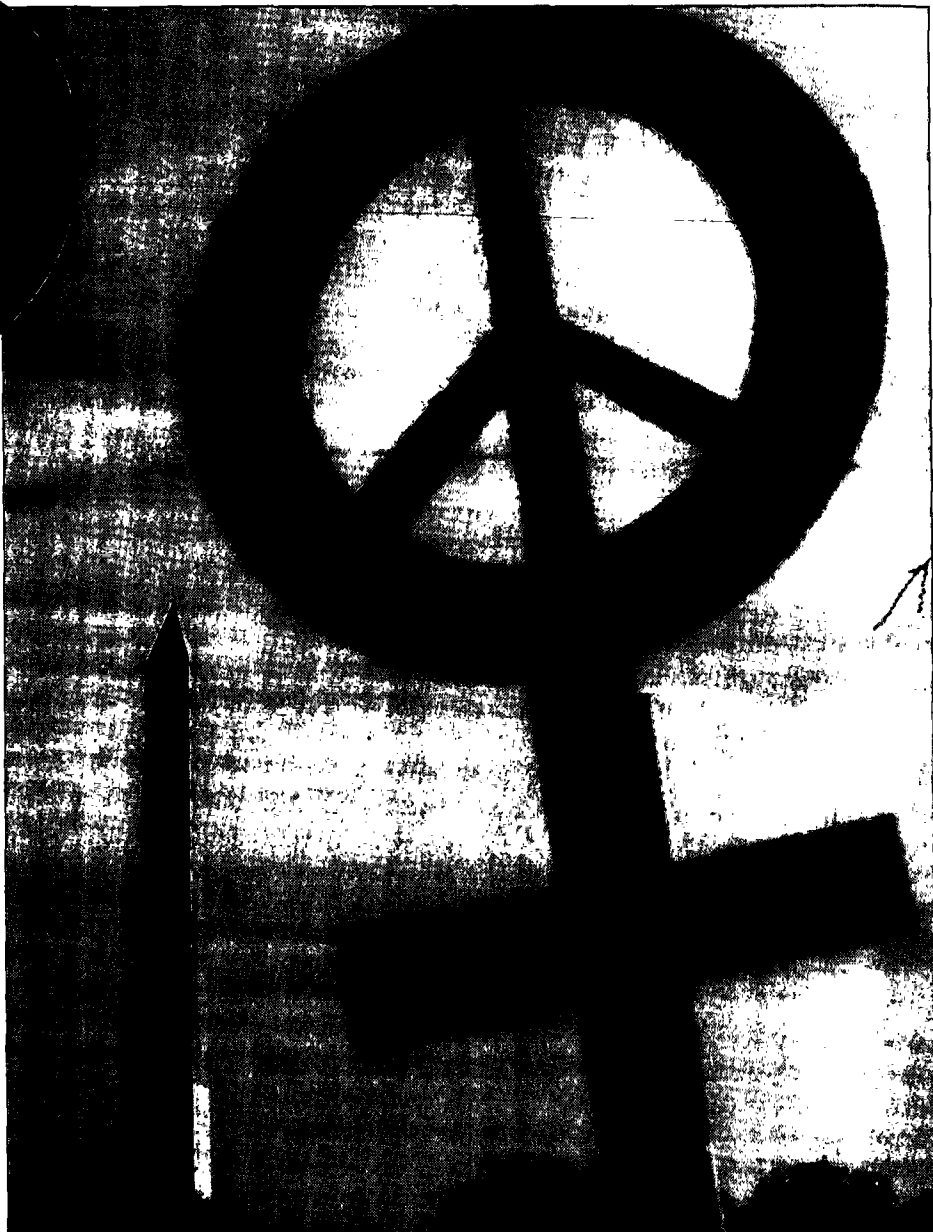
When condemning the Million Mom March for gun control, which he called the "Million Dyke March," Savage dismissed concern for the children killed each year by guns. "They're not kids, they're ghetto slime," he said.

Savage doesn't like "turd world" immigrants either: "You open the door to them, and the next thing you know, they are defecating on your country and breeding out of control."

Gays and Latinos pose a particular threat to white people, says Savage: "With the [Latino] population that has emerged, since they breed like rabbits, in many cases the whites will become a minority in their own nation. ... The white people don't breed as often for whatever reason. I guess many homosexuals are involved. That is also part of the grand plan, to push homosexuality to cut down on the white race."

He has called upon the government to "arrest the leaders of the anti-war movement" should we invade Iraq. And, when Oregon activists protested his show, he threatened to release the names and addresses of these "little hateful nothings" to his fans, presumably meaning the white supremacists in his audience.

MSNBC President Erik Sorenson defends Savage, describing him as a man who is "brash, passionate and smart" and able to provide the network "compelling opinion and analysis with an edge." Or as an MSNBC press release put it, *The Savage Nation* is "a legitimate attempt to expand the marketplace of ideas."



A view from the Code Pink demonstration in front of the White House on March 8.

Illegitimate Ideas

Donahue, however, is a different matter. Sorenson fired Phil Donahue because the network believes his progressive ideas could interfere with the marketplace (i.e., advertising revenue) when war breaks out.

A study commissioned by NBC, and leaked to Rick Ellis of www.allyourtv.com, described Donahue as "a tired, left-wing liberal out of touch with the current marketplace," noting that he would be a "difficult public face for NBC in a time of war."

The study went on to say: "He seems to delight in presenting guests who are anti-war, anti-Bush and skeptical of the administration's motives." The report

warned that MSNBC's *Donahue* could turn into "a home for the liberal anti-war agenda at the same time that our competitors are waving the flag at every opportunity."

In a leaked e-mail, one MSNBC executive complained -- about *Donahue*, "Sometimes, I feel as if I'm watching MSNPR rather than a network associated with NBC News," while another network executive advised MSNBC to capitalize on the "anticipated larger audience who will tune in during a time of war" and "reinvent itself." He suggested that the network "cross-pollinate our programming" by using its television personalities

to comment on the war. "It's unlikely that we can use Phil in this way, particularly given his public stance on the advisability of the war effort."

"This sums up in one incident the worst of U.S. media," says Jim Naureckas, editor of *Extra!* "I think that people who have not been following this very closely believe *Donahue* was a test of whether you could have a viable progressive talk show on a network. But the test was really whether a major news network would *allow* a progressive show on its schedule. The answer is apparently no. Anti-war, anti-Bush politics are off limits for corporate media."

Calling All Leakers

The United Nations has opened an investigation of the bugging of its delegations by the National Security Agency, a covert operation that came to light when a NSA document was leaked to the *Observer* of London. (See "Spies Like Us" in this issue.) A 28-year-old British woman, who worked at the Government Communications Headquarters, has been arrested on suspicion of violating the Official Secrets Act.

Wayne Madsen, a former NSA intelligence officer and an occasional *In These Times* contributor who works at

the Electronic Privacy Information Center, told the *Observer*: "My feeling is that this was an authorized leak. I've been hearing for months of people in the U.S. and British intelligence community who are deeply concerned about their governments 'cooking' intelligence to link Iraq to al-Qaeda."

Daniel Ellsberg, who leaked the Pentagon Papers in 1971, issued an appeal for other whistleblowers to step forward:

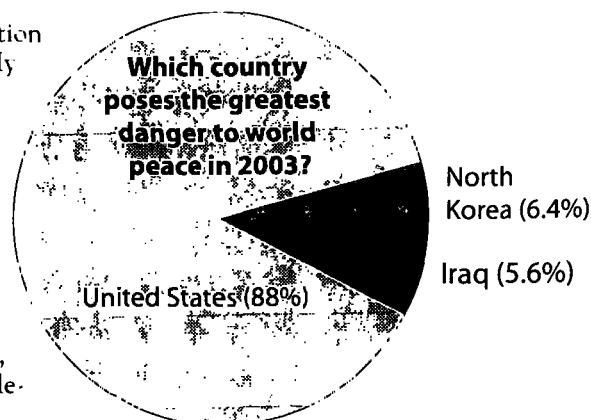
This leak is potentially more significant than the release of the Pentagon Papers, since it is extraordinarily timely. More officials who know—as I did in 1964-65—that the president and their bosses are lying us into a wrongful, reckless, unnecessary war should consider doing right now, before the bombs are falling, what I wish I had done at a comparable point, in the months before the onset of the Rolling Thunder bombing [in Vietnam]: going to Congress and the press with documents that undercut official lies. There is still time to avert this invasion with sufficiently comprehensive truth-telling.

Hope in the Pope

Longtime peace advocate Dr. Helen Caldicott is calling on people to e-mail Pope John Paul II at accreditamenti@pressva.va and encourage him to "take a historically unprecedented action of his own and travel to Baghdad" to "act as the ultimate human shield." President Bush might think twice about bombing His Holiness, Caldicott hopes, giving time for the world's leaders to "commit themselves to identifying and implementing a peaceful solution to this war that the world's majority clearly does not support."

Download It

A group of some of the nation's foremost graphic designers are lending their art to the peace movement by creating public domain anti-war posters. The stated mission of Another Poster for Peace is "to help create a grassroots campaign for patriotic dissent as a counter to the onslaught of fear and warmongering currently in the media." Download their art at www.anotherposterforpeace.com.



Source: Time Europe Online Poll

And the Winner is ...

Time Europe, the continental cousin of *Time* magazine, has been asking its online readers, "Which country poses the greatest danger to world peace in 2003?" Of the 687,000 people who have responded, 5.6 percent chose North Korea, 6.4 percent selected Iraq and 88 percent voted for the United States.

As Ye Sow

The decade-long embargo of Iraq, which has resulted in the impoverishment of the population and disintegration of medical services, is responsible for the deaths of more than 3,000 children every week, according to the *Journal of Maternal-Fetal and Neonatal Medicine*. The report says that the total number of children who have died as a result of the embargo stands at 1.6 million.

Timeless

"[They] hate our order, our civilization, our enterprising industry, our pure religion. This wild, reckless, indolent, uncertain and superstitious race have no sympathy for [our] character. ... Their history describes an unbroken circle of bigotry and blood." So said British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli speaking of the Irish in the 1860s.

Setting the Stage

Hollywood set designer George Allison is busy at work in Qatar, building a \$200,000 television set from which Gen. Tommy Franks and other military commanders will give daily updates on the coming war. Allison seems like the right man for the job. He has previously created sets for illusionist David Blaine. ■



ELLEN GOULD

UNIONYES WARNO

The AFL-CIO
charts a new
course for
labor by
opposing
an attack
on Iraq



By David Moberg

The unanimous decision by the AFL-CIO Executive Council to oppose the Bush administration's Iraq policy reflects an historic watershed in the labor movement. The late February statement did not oppose a multilateral war against Iraq under all circumstances, nor did it reject unilateral military action "in defense of our national security." But it represents a break in a long tradition of American unions backing the president on foreign military policy. And it marks a further step toward a more internationalist perspective by a labor movement that historically has been quite nationalist.

On one level, the call for international unity, restraint and cooperation with the disarmament inspectors in Iraq reflects a narrow and carefully hedged critique of the Bush administration that grew out of internal discussions among union leaders who had been briefed by a series of former high-level Clinton administration officials. It is a specific response by labor officialdom to a very specific possibility of war.

In other ways, however, the resolution was shaped by a changing labor movement facing an administration that is aggressively anti-union and brazenly in favor of a new American empire that actively undermines the welfare of

most working people. The shift should not be overstated: If Al Gore were in the White House pushing for war in Iraq, labor might be much more accommodating. Nevertheless a major change has been in the making.

The end of the Cold War marked a dramatic divide. American labor had been much more militantly anti-communist and supportive of U.S. foreign policy than unions in most of the world, thus weakening the international labor movement. But the fall of the Berlin Wall eliminated the glue that bound unions to the government, especially at a time when employers and the government became less sympathetic to labor. After the fall of communism, employers and governments saw less need for political buffers such as the International Labor Organization, established in 1919 to provide protection for workers so they would be less attracted to the revolutionary politics of the new Soviet Union. U.S. government funding of labor's international activities, intimately linked to Cold War politics, also rapidly declined.

More importantly, the rise of corporate globalization made many unions increasingly skeptical of government policies that did nothing about or even encouraged the flight of U.S. corporations overseas. Unions began to see multinational corporations and their

apologists in government, both Republican and Democratic, as hostile to the interests of American workers. Consequently, U.S. unions started working more with unions in other countries to fight those multinational corporations, instead of fighting communism (or other leftists within the labor movement).

The first big break came in the mid '80s, when the labor movement split over Ronald Reagan's Central America policies. Some of the most ardent critics of Reagan and the AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland were leaders of unions, such as Textile Workers President Jack Sheinkman, that had suffered greatly from globalization and were beginning to develop a more internationalist strategy. Widening fights over globalization led many of these unions to increasingly support leftist unions overseas and to adopt an international strategy more focused on threats from multinational corporations.

Meanwhile, the labor movement itself was changing. As historian Nelson Lichtenstein, author of the recent book *State of the Union*, suggests, the upper ranks of union staff are increasingly filled with veterans of the '60s. As New Left activists, many of them opposed the Vietnam War when only a handful of union leaders spoke out—belatedly and without much concrete action—against the war. As Jon Baker of the Machinists says of his fellow veterans of the '60s anti-war actions, "We're the hard-hats now, not the hippies."

The change in labor movement staff was accelerated by the election of John Sweeney in 1995 as president of the AFL-CIO. Much of the old labor international operation was either swept aside or refocused with more progressive appointments. Also, the make-up of union membership has shifted—more minorities, more women, more new immigrants, and more workers for whom the old Cold War red-baiting is not even a distant memory.

Sweeney's victory gave new impetus to the formation of broad coalitions with community, religious and other progressive groups. It also gave legitimacy to grassroots activity within the labor movement. Over the past few months, a growing number of individual unions have adopted anti-war resolutions. Representing about one-third of the AFL-CIO membership, those unions include AFSCME (public employees), UNITE (apparel and textile), the Service Employees, Communications Workers, Postal Workers and Farm Workers.

But even less progressive unions are beginning to question the war. Machinists President Tom Buffenbarger, who supports Bush's missile defense plans and called for "vengeance"

after 9/11, said after the recent Executive Council vote: "What are we fighting for? Are we fighting for Wall Street's right to make a buck by destroying our community? And the answer we get from government—and it doesn't matter if it's Democratic or Republican—is that the more we engage in trade, trade can be a useful tool in bringing down dictatorial regimes. So why weren't we doing that with Iraq or Korea? It's all bull. I don't mind asking for patience and prudence before we send some members off to help get oil or cheap labor in developing nations."

Many of these tendencies came together with the formation of U.S. Labor Against the War, a coalition of dozens of local unions, district organizations and central labor councils from a wide range of unions. USLAW's position is more fervently opposed to any war in Iraq than the AFL-CIO resolution, and its supporters have been active in protests, including its own March 12 day of workplace education about the war.

While leftists and veterans of the '60s—including some actual veterans of the Vietnam War—were active in forming USLAW, they too have found unexpected allies. For example, in the Philadelphia Central Labor Council, John Braxton, co-president of a small teachers union local, discovered that the head of the building trades was not opposed to an anti-war resolution, but simply wanted to discuss it first with his board. At the next council meeting, when opponents questioned why unions should take a stand on Iraq when they hadn't spoken out on other U.S. invasions, like Haiti, the building trades leader responded that labor should have spoken out then—and that's why it must do so now.

The groundswell of labor movement opposition to Bush's Iraq policy undoubtedly helped consolidate the unanimous AFL-CIO action. The passionate outcry against an invasion of Iraq by labor movements around the world may also have encouraged U.S. union leaders. Unions in Britain, Italy and Australia announced intentions to block movement of materials for war by striking. In February, union representatives in about a dozen countries joined with U.S. labor leaders and USLAW in a unique joint telephone press conference voicing opposition to the war.

But the hostility of the Bush administration toward unions—and its pursuit of a radical agenda favoring the rich, destroying key social programs and failing to deal effectively with the nation's economic problems—also made unions much less willing to believe or support the president. "There is a sense that Bush is not our friend, and not being a friend, why should I trust him on the war?" says veteran labor leader Jerry Tucker, who was an active United Auto Workers opponent to Vietnam.

In past wars, administrations have offered concessions to labor to win support (and punished the Industrial Workers of the World after World War I, when it was alone in rejecting any pro-war deal). But Bush is leading the attack on unions while preparing for war. "This movement developed at the intersection of Bush's domestic and foreign policies," says Food and Allied Service Trades Secretary-Treasurer Gene Bruskin, a leader in USLAW.

Organized labor is still developing an independent foreign policy perspective based on a broad, progressive critique of both globalization and the drive for a new American empire. Eventually the shifts in organized labor's foreign policy perspective may make their mark on the Democratic Party and American politics more broadly. Bush can take some of the credit for speeding that change along. ■

The fall of the Berlin Wall eliminated the glue that bound unions to the government. Afterward, employers and the government no longer saw a need for political buffers against communism.

Bush vs. the World

Why Washington can't go it alone

By Ian Williams

United Nations

George W. Bush has offered the United Nations two choices. Either enough Security Council members can be bribed and bullied into acquiescing to the invasion of Iraq the Americans have been so consistently threatening, or the Security Council can refuse to give him and chum Tony Blair the resolution the latter so desperately wants—and Bush will go ahead and invade anyway. Both options lead to U.N. irrelevance.

Kofi Annan cautiously warned that “if the U.S. and others were to go outside the Council and take military action, it would not be in conformity with the Charter.” But such protestations were never likely to cut mustard with the White House, whose officials had publicly declared their disdain for the organization and the U.N. Charter as they slithered on the fringes of politics long before becoming the mainstream. Their only interest in a U.N. resolution has been to use its outcome to further weaken the organization. Until opposition in the Turkish



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parliament showed how useful a U.N. resolution could be, the president was interested only insofar as Blair faces regime change himself without a vote.

For different reasons, many leftists and liberals will be equally disillusioned with the United Nations. But the organization is a reflection of the real world. First, it is not a pacifist organization. Its founders would have been very dubious about the efficacy of Gandhian tactics against the Nazis. The organization was founded to maintain the status quo and to make sure there would not be another world war.

That does not mean the small wars should be overlooked. The founders were well aware of how small wars could quickly escalate, and their contemporaries saw a clear line from the occupations of Czechoslovakia, Manchuria and Abyssinia to the worldwide conflict that followed. So the U.N. Charter contains specifications calling for massive military force to be used against any aggressor. Oddly enough, the closest it came

to acting that part was when Iraq invaded and occupied Kuwait.

Similarly, the notion that each state is equal is a polite fiction. Not even in the most idealist dreams of its planners did anyone think that Nauru, population 15,000, was really equal to China. Hence the Security Council with its 15 members, five of whom are permanent and hold veto power. The veto is very undemocratic. So is reality.

Indeed, the less powerful countries use their vetoes either symbolically or only to defend their close state interests. So in part, the reluctance of Russia and France to declare a veto from the outset of their resistance to Bush's accelerated war plans was the awareness that it did not reflect the reality of the 21st century. The United States could stop them taking action, but they could not stop Washington, short of unleashing World War III. Neither of them was going to risk national suicide on behalf of Saddam Hussein—who both all but admit has been cheating and defying the weapons inspectors.

After a war, will the United Nations be seen as irrelevant and ineffectual? Perhaps by both sides. But the institution is too useful to everyone for it to wither on the vine. It survived its ineffectiveness during Rwanda, when a U.S. veto stopped the peace keepers from being reinforced during the massacres. It outlasted Bosnia, when it was accused of being an "accomplice to genocide" in the face of studied U.S. refusal to commit military power until forced by the Srebrenica massacre. In Kosovo, although President Clinton vetoed British attempts to get a U.N. resolution authorizing intervention, he still needed the United Nations to legitimize the occupation and the administration after the war.

Despite the diehard opposition to multilateralism from almost everyone in the administration but Colin Powell, Washington will try hard to get retrospective U.N. endorsement of any occupation of Iraq—regardless of whether the invasion receives any sanction. After all, in the *Alice in Wonderland* world of White House logic, the official reason for invasion is to force Iraq to abide by U.N. resolutions—regardless of whether the United Nations wants it!

Of course, that would be a bitter pill for the unilateralists around the White House to swallow, but reality, in the form of money, is more likely to impinge upon their planning any nebulous notions of international legality. In the end, facing a deficit of avalanche proportions boosted by the direct costs of the war and the economic uncertainty it has engendered, the White House will still have to pay for the occupation. Under the Geneva Conventions, that is more than just paying the troops: The occupying power must maintain all essential services. If there is to be the slightest chance of getting the European Union and Japan to assume any proportion of the costs, they will need a U.N. mandate, not a vice-regal order from Rumsfeld or Cheney.

Reality will force the
United States to stay
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In addition, the only feasible way to stop mass starvation will be to continue the "oil for food" program, which depends on the expertise of the United Nations and its liaison with local Iraqi officials, not to mention the other U.N. agencies with experience in massive relief operations. Without too much cynicism, we can predict that the part of the French and Russian opposition that depended upon access to Iraqi oil could be muted by an international administration that gave them a pipe in the trough.

On the other hand, if Washington wants to permanently sideline the United Nations, as various spokesmen have

threatened, they face a serious problem. The only effective institution they have to use would be NATO—which they have already seriously weakened by treating some of its most important members like unruly satellites. Their most effective military ally, England, may not be so reliable after the Labour Party, the British electorate, and even the military and Foreign Office professionals are finished with Tony Blair. The only other significant U.S. military ally is Turkey, no less than 94 percent of whose population opposed the Iraq war the last time anyone bothered to ask them.

Any such U.S. abdication may further transform the United Nations into an alliance against overweening American power that is beginning to form among Russia, China and the major Europeans. No one is in a position to pose a military threat to the United States, and no one is stupid enough to threaten it. But with the U.S. economy in a precarious state, these allies could make more concerted decisions on trade and finance, and would have less tendency to go along with Bush's subsequent adventures in Iran and North Korea.

If the United States tries going solo as a global cop, it is in deep trouble. Already, as a result of its actions toward Iraq, Washington has postponed or aborted a solution to the Cyprus problem as a sop to the Turkish military. It has given Ariel Sharon a free hand to confirm all the rumors that Washington is running an anti-Muslim crusade. It still hasn't found Osama bin Laden or stabilized Afghanistan, yet Undersecretary of State John Bolton is promising the Israelis that Washington will deal next with Iran, North Korea and Syria. (In the past, he also has mentioned Cuba and Libya.) It's a tough job to clean up the world on your own, especially when your clumsiness has you kicking over the diplomatic bucket all the time.

Reality will force the United States to stay involved in the United Nations, but the organization alone won't stop U.S. unilateralism and exceptionalism. That remedy has to be found here at home. ■

Ian Williams regularly covers the United Nations for *In These Times*. He is the author of *The U.N. for Beginners*.

Which Side Are We On?

Redefining Who's Us and Who's Them

By G. William Domhoff

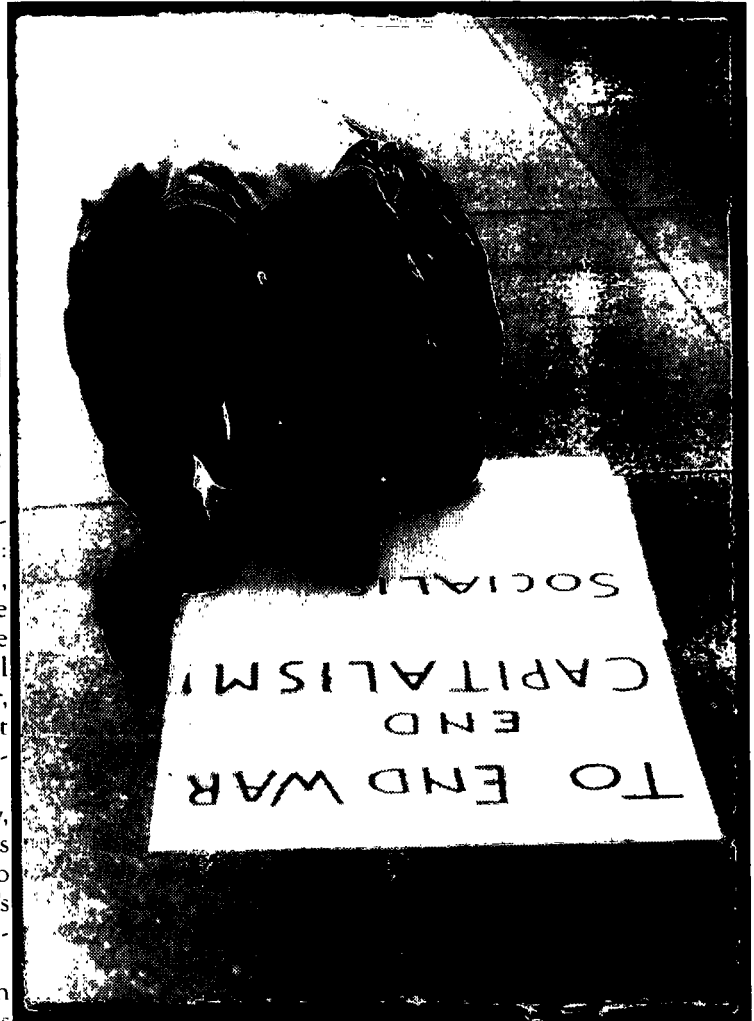
The standard story line for insurgent social movements of the left and right goes something like this: The country is sustained by good, hardworking, average people in the middle like us, but we have little or no power. For the left, these good people are the workers; for the right, they are the middle class of small business owners, farmers and white-collar workers. However, these good people are exploited and dominated by the few at the top; capitalists for the left, and the bureaucrats, internationalist financiers and atheists for the right.

The good, hardworking majority have a right to be angry, and they should organize to create social change that brings about a new social order. For the left, this is a transition to socialism, gender equality and racial equality; for the right, it's a return to an idyllic world of small business, small government, male dominance and white Christian rule.

Social science research supports part of this picture through studies of social stratification and wealth distribution. There is indeed an obvious pecking order from top to bottom in terms of jobs, education and social status, although the reasons why some people end up on the bottom are far different from what the political right imagines. It is also well-documented that the few at the top have a highly disproportionate share of wealth and income. Indeed, wealth has not been this concentrated since 1929.

There's good reason to believe that the top 1 percent of wealth holders—who, according to the most recent figures, own 47 percent of the nation's financial wealth—have a dominant role in the economy and government. They can invest where and when they wish, and hire and fire most workers at will. They have a monopoly on policy expertise through thousands of charitable foundations and an array of think tanks. They have a huge number of lobbyists and public relations people. They can have a big impact on politicians through campaign donations. They get themselves appointed to top positions in Washington.

In trying to bring about egalitarian social change, however, it doesn't make good political sense to frame this picture of economic concentration and class domination in terms of one social class against another. Defining the "opponents" as "the capital-



WARREN FRIEDMAN

ists" or "the rich" is a strategic mistake. Because the problem is developing new policies and gaining political power, the struggle should be framed from the start as a political one, not an economic one. The "in-group" should be all those who come to embrace the program of the egalitarian movement, and the "out-group" should be all those who oppose such changes.

If the conflict is framed this way, an egalitarian coalition has a chance to win over the moderates, neutrals and independents who currently identify with capitalists and might be offended by blanket criticisms of them as a class. It may even attract dissident members of the capitalist class who transcend their class interests and in the process become very valuable in legitimating the movement to those in the middle who are hesitant to climb on board.

But the problem is not just labeling all capitalists as enemies. Once the conflict is framed in class terms, those defined as members of the working class take on all virtue, and those outside the working class are ignored or demonized, whether they are rich or not. Furthermore, doing politics in terms of class categories does not sit well with most of the everyday working people to whom it is meant to appeal. The whole thrust of the average Americans'

experience is to break down class distinctions, not heighten them. They do not like to think of themselves in terms of their class identity, which immediately reminds them that they are not rich and have a lower status than they might like.

The ideal model for a more open-ended framing of a social conflict is provided by the civil rights movement, which defined the enemy not as “whites,” but as “racists” and “bigots.” Racists and bigots included most whites in the South at that time, of course, so there was a clear opposition. But at the same time, there was room for pro-integration whites. Drawing on the Christian tradition, the movement therefore was able to utilize the concepts of forgiveness, redemption and conversion in the service of strategic nonviolence to forge a black-white coalition. By opening its doors to people who believed in equal rights for African-Americans—whatever their class, race, religion or previous beliefs—the movement enabled people to change their attitudes without violating their self-images as decent people.

Similarly, if a “cross-class” coalition is needed to assemble a majority for an egalitarian program in the 21st century, then it is better to begin with a political framing of “us-versus-them” that does not define one class or another as the enemy. Studies by social psychologists show that an us-versus-them framing is a powerful basis for a social movement. An in-group definition provides a strong sense of solidarity. It makes possible social comparisons with privileged exclusionary groups, which can generate a sense of injustice and contribute to a willingness to act. The problem, then, is to define the out-group in such a way that people can abandon this group and join the in-group. Thus, the out-group should not be defined by characteristics that it cannot relinquish, such as gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or class origins.

So how should the conflict over transforming American society be framed by nonviolent egalitarian activists? The designated opponents of the egalitarian activists should be the “corporate-conservative coalition” and the Republican Party. Framing the general conflict in terms of egalitarians versus corporate conservatives, and Democrats versus Republicans in the political arena, has two distinct advantages in addition to avoiding a demonization of “the rich” or the capitalist class. First, these are categories from which people can remove themselves. They can change their minds.

Second, these categories leave a great many as “third parties”—people who define themselves as independents and moderates—who do not feel labeled as enemies and put on the defensive by criticisms of the corporate-conservative coalition and the Republican Party. That leaves egalitarians with a potential majority of liberals, moderates, independents and Democrats to win to their side.

But who is the egalitarian “we” that would battle the corporate-conservative coalition? It starts with those who currently make up the nonviolent insurgent groups in the United States: the coalition of white progressives, liberal people of color, progressive trade unionists, feminists, living-wage activists, environmentalists, gay and lesbian activists, global justice activists, and anti-sweatshop activists who work together on

many issues and usually vote Democratic in partisan elections.

From there, the coalition has to build out to the neutrals, bystanders, moderates and skeptics who are the majority at the present time. The movement has to offer everyone a shared common political identity that does not attempt to downplay or erase their current social identities. And that is where the concept of “egalitarian” comes into the picture. Egalitarianism is not only a set of values that a great many Americans endorse in the abstract, but it can provide the basis for a collective social identity within the political arena for a coalition-based movement.

Once a framing in terms of egalitarian Democrats versus corporate conservatives and Republicans is in place, the chief executive officers of major corporations become fair game, because they call the shots for the corporate-conservative coalition and regularly oppose egalitarian policy proposals. So, too, should a wide range of business organizations be named and criticized, because they are on record with a set of policy recommendations that don't benefit those in the egalitarian coalition. For that matter, specific Democrats can be criticized within this overall context, such as members of the Democratic Leadership Council, because they function as part of the corporate-conservative coalition.

But an attack on “the rich” or “the capitalist class,” or worse, “the capitalist pigs and bloodsuckers”? Then what about, for just one example, New Jersey Sen. Jon Corzine, the multimillionaire banker who has gone beyond his class interests to advocate a sharply defined progressive agenda? This Democrat opposed Bush's tax cuts for the rich, wants an “activist” government, sees a universal health care system as a “basic right,” and opposes the death penalty.

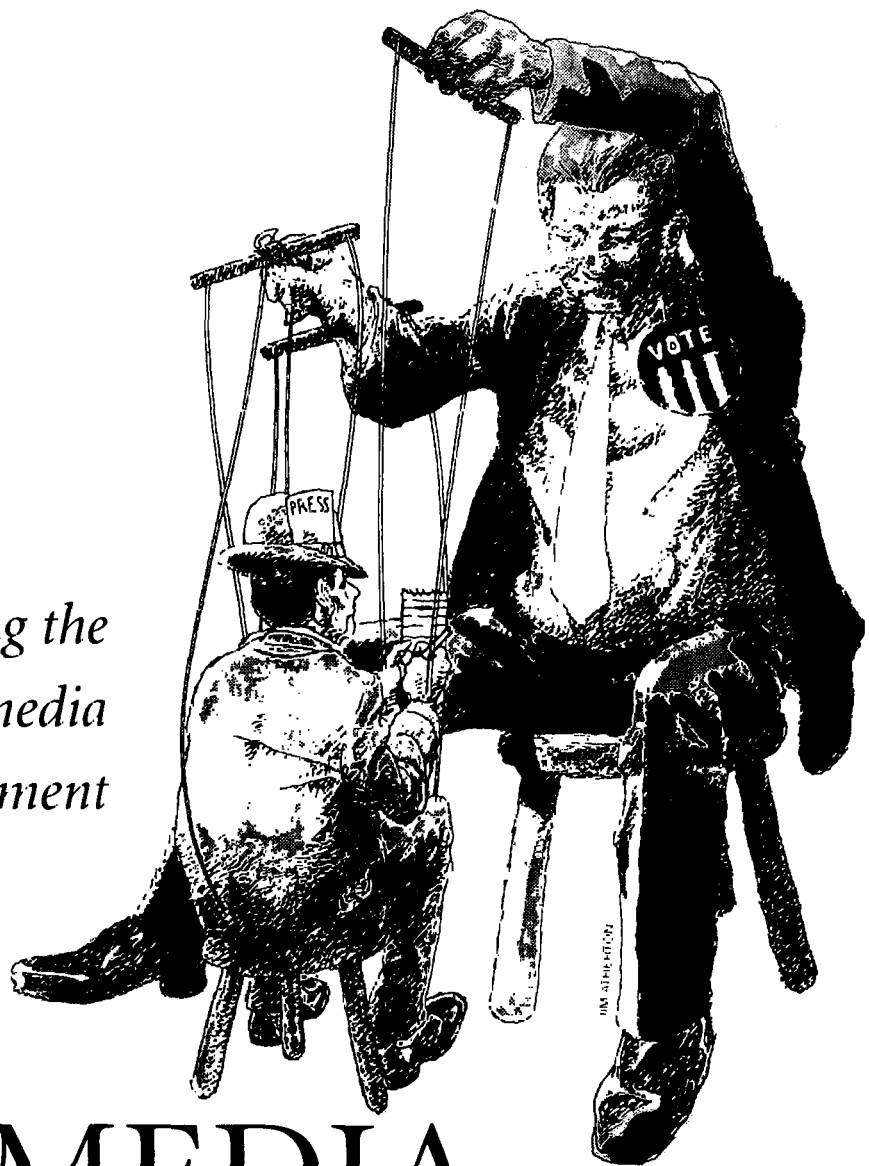
Combined with programs for planning through the market, full employment, and an expansion of the earned income tax credit, the Corzine program would be a giant step forward in improving the day-to-day lives of the 80 percent of Americans who haven't really benefited from the growth of the economy since the '80s. Is there

To bring about egalitarian change, it doesn't make good political sense to frame this picture of economic concentration and class domination in terms of one social class against another.

an egalitarian in America who would hesitate for one second in accepting this package as a great start? Shouldn't Corzine, a rich, straight, white male multimillionaire, with a wife who is a strong feminist, be in the coalition? Is he one of “us” or one of “them”? ■

G. William Domhoff is a sociology professor at the University of California, Santa Cruz. This essay is adapted from Changing the Powers That Be: How the Left Can Stop Losing and Win (Rowman and Littlefield). Domhoff encourages readers to continue the dialogue at www.inthesetimes.com.

*Building the
U.S. media
reform movement*



OUR MEDIA, NOT THEIRS

BY ROBERT W. MCCHESENEY AND JOHN NICHOLS

When citizens begin to entertain the notion that media can be an issue—rather than something that simply happens to us, and to our democracy—they get excited. The fundamental challenge is not convincing people that something should be done about media structures. The challenge is to convince people that something *can* be done. That simple leap of faith, if it is taken by enough Americans, will provide us with a base that is strong enough to challenge corporate control and radically reshape the media land-

scape in the United States. So how do we free the political imagination? How do we widen the parameters of the debate to include topics that have been left off the table for generations? How do we make media a national issue?

Countless American activists, from John Brown to Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Mother Jones to Martin Luther King Jr., have proved that it is possible to force an issue into the nation's political discourse, even an issue that the political and economic elites would prefer to keep off the radar. The environmental movement also shared a damning feature with the cause of media reform: There were no powerful monied

interests that would benefit by its success. And as Saul Alinsky said, when faced with organized money, the only recourse is organized people.

To determine whether a media reform movement could generate enough popular support to overcome organized money, we must answer the three key questions that Wisconsin Sen. Gaylord Nelson posed for the burgeoning environmental movement back in the '60s:

Does the issue affect everyone in some fundamental way? Yes. In this age of the Internet, round-the-clock cable and broadcast programming, and advertising campaigns that reach even into schools, the average American is in contact with media for almost 12 hours per day.

Is there an alternative to the status quo, a remedy that can and should be put in place? Yes again. Though the exact contours of a U.S. reform program need to be developed, none of the media issues that ought to concern Americans are unique to this country. And none of the responses to corporate media that have been advanced elsewhere would be difficult to adapt to America.

Do people believe they have the power to implement necessary changes and, if not, can they be made to believe anew in their ability to use

their wit and wisdom. In fact, our media system is not the legitimate result of free market competition. It is the result of relentless lobbying from big-business interests that have won explicit government policies and subsidies permitting them to scrap public-interest obligations and increase commercialization and conglomeration. It is untenable to accept such massive subsidies for the wealthy, and to content ourselves with the "freedom" to forge alternatives that only occupy the margins.

How, then, can we force a change in the media systems that dominate the discourse and misinform the debate?

The problem with organizing a media democracy movement is not a lack of activity. Numerous groups work the corridors of power in Washington, struggling to win recognition of public-interest values under the most difficult circumstances imaginable. These groups have won some important battles, particularly on Internet privacy issues. Over the past six months, they have organized a stunning campaign to stop the FCC from scrapping media ownership caps.

Beyond the Beltway, there are strong currents of activism on media issues—from local media watch groups and media literacy

Consider what the U.S. media landscape could look like: A vibrant flowering garden instead of a commercialized strip mall.

democracy to set things right? For now, the honest answer is no. And for good reason. The sheer corruption of U.S. politics has erected a daunting obstacle. It is difficult to be confident about the prospects for reform when regulators and politicians are frequently in the pockets of big-spending corporate communication lobbies, and—surprise, surprise—there is little coverage of media activism or media policy debates in the corporate news media.

Moreover, activists are well aware that over the past generation the political right has zeroed in on the media as a primary target for their political work. According to Sally Covington's study of leading conservative foundations, they have spent in the vicinity of one-half of their funds to promote pro-corporate, right-wing media and media "deregulation." In addition to having deep pockets, these big-bankroll conservatives march in ideological harmony with much of the commercial news media, especially on matters of neoliberal economic policy, free trade and military interventions abroad. As the media cheer on a potentially perpetual war that has yet to be declared—let alone explained in a coherent manner—it feels like the situation is only deteriorating.

Demoralized about the prospects for structural changes, progressives channeled their energies toward what they can change and improve: their own media. Yet as important as this work is, there are inherent limits to what can be done with independent media, even with access to the Internet. Too often, the alternative media remain on the margins, seemingly confirming that commercial media conglomerates have become so massive because they "give the people what they want."

The problem with this disconnect is that it suggests that corporate media have mastered the marketplace on the basis of

education efforts to newspaper unions and microradio broadcasters. But we need to better network our organizations and link our campaigns. With scant resources available, allied groups are often forced to try to outscramble one another in the race for funding. More often than not, we are also forced to defend against new corporate initiatives, rather than to effectively advance positive reforms.

We need to energize and build the movement by sharing resources and strategizing to work pro-actively in ways that cross-support a diverse array of approaches, networks and campaigns. This way we can best build the coalition—a national media reform coalition—necessary to drive the movement.

Making media a political issue in America is going to take an energized coalition to get the issues on the national radar. How can such a coalition be built? First and foremost, by organizing in our communities. Yes, foundations and other nonprofit organizations have to be a source of seed money for initial development of the movement, but the reform coalition must ultimately be broad-based and member-funded like Greenpeace or, dare we say it, the National Rifle Association. "All of the issues we talk about are interlinked," explains Jeffrey Chester of the Center for Digital Democracy. "We are fighting against a lot of the same corporations. The corporations, while they supposedly compete with one another, actually work together very well when it comes to lobbying. We need to link up the activists and start to work together as well as the corporations do for the other side."

Even if we can draw together all the key media-reform players in Washington and around the country, however, our growing coalition will be little more than a political footnote if we do not quickly reach out beyond the media-reform circle. To fuel a mass

movement, we must reach out to and involve organized groups that currently are not very active in media reform but are seriously hampered by the current media system. Absent far too long from media reform activism have been the cause's natural allies: organized labor, teachers, librarians, civil libertarians, artists, religious denominations and civil rights groups.

To be sure, there has been some movement in this regard. For example, the Newspaper Guild section of the Communication Workers union, which represents print journalists and other newspaper employees across the country, is becoming a serious and savvy player in debates over media monopoly and diversity. The National Organization for Women (NOW), many disability rights groups, as well as a number of gay and lesbian organizations, have developed effective and influential critiques of mainstream media coverage of issues concerning their communities—and, increasingly, of the media structures that maintain stereotypes.

Both the NAACP and Rainbow/PUSH have targeted media as a central focus for their activities—organizing forums, sending leaders to testify before Congress, and raising tough questions about federal policies regarding minority ownership of broadcast outlets. The United Church of Christ has been doing good work for years, and the Unitarians are now supporting some vital media reform initiatives. The American Academy of Pediatrics went so far as to formally resolve that commercial television was a public health hazard for children. These groups have to be brought together to strategize and maximize their effect on the national level.

While it may seem like a no-brainer for groups that have long suffered from media neglect to endorse fundamental reform of the

media, there are no guarantees that these groups will simply fall into place as coalition partners. Media corporations do not just lobby Congress; they lobby a lot of the groups that suffer under the current system. Some of those groups have been bought off by contributions from foundations associated with AOL, Verizon and other media monoliths; others—particularly large sections of organized labor—have been convinced that they have a vested interest in maintaining a status quo that consistently kicks them in the teeth.

Media reform needs its equivalent of the Voting Rights Act or the Equal Rights Amendment—simple, basic reforms that everyone can understand, embrace and advocate in union halls, church basements and school assemblies. There is no way around it: Structural media reform is mandatory if we are serious about addressing the crisis of democracy in the United States. We see the following proposals as essential—though certainly not exclusive—starting points for mobilizing a media-reform agenda:

- Establish a full tier of low-power, non-commercial community radio and television stations across the nation.
- Apply existing anti-monopoly laws to the media and, where necessary, expand their reach to restrict ownership of radio stations to one or two per owner. Consider similar steps for television stations and moves to break the lock of newspaper chains on entire regions.
- Establish a formal study and hearings to determine fair media ownership regulations across all sectors.
- Revamp and supercharge public broadcasting to eliminate commercial pressures, reduce immediate political pressures, and serve communities without significant disposable incomes.
- Provide for a \$200 tax credit that all taxpayers can use to apply their tax dollars to any nonprofit medium, as long as it meets Internal Revenue Service criteria. This tool would allow new low-power radio and television stations, as well as existing community broadcasters, labor union newspapers and other publications to have the resources to provide serious news coverage and cultural programming.
- Lower mailing costs for nonprofit and significantly non-commercial publications.
- Eliminate political candidate advertising as a condition of a broadcast license; or require that a station must run, for free, ads of similar length for all candidates on the ballot.
- Decommmercialize local TV news. In return for the grant of access to the airwaves, which makes media companies rich, require that those companies set aside an hour each day of commercial-free time for news programming, with a budget based on a percentage of the station's revenues. This would free journalists to do the job of informing citizens, and allow stations to compete on the basis of quality news-gathering as opposed to sensationalism.
- Reduce or eliminate TV advertising to children under 12.
- Revamp copyright laws to reflect their intended goal: to protect the ability of creative producers to earn a living, and to protect the public's right to a healthy and viable public domain.

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Many of these ideas are already popular with Americans—when they get a chance to hear about them. Moreover, the enthusiasm tends to cross the political spectrum. The corporate media lobbies work to keep their operations in Washington outside of the public view, because they suspect the same thing we do: When people hear about the corruption of communication policy-making, they're appalled.

But the new media reform coalition we envision cannot be simply about building toward a great day of reckoning. It must also have the near-term objective of organizing on the pressing policy matters that are currently in play in Washington. As mentioned above, the FCC is considering the elimination of the remaining rules that prevent media consolidation, including bans on owning TV stations and newspapers in the same community and limits on the number of TV stations and cable TV systems a single corporation may own nationwide.

The corporate media lobbying superstars are putting a full-court press on the FCC. The proposed scrapping of these regulations will increase the shareholder value of these firms dramatically, and will undoubtedly lead to a massive wave of mergers and acquisitions. If the lesson of past ownership deregulation—particularly the 1996 downsizing of radio ownership rules—provide any indication of where this change will take us, we can expect decreased funding for journalism and increased commercialism. All of this is taking place beneath the radar of corporate journalism, unreported and unexamined—as the 1996 Telecommunications Act was—in classically corrupt fashion.

We know a thousand frustrations and disappointments lie ahead. But consider where the journey could take us. Consider what the

U.S. media landscape would look like if all of the reform agenda we propose were enacted. Corporate dominance over the free flow of information would be curbed, and a truly diverse, creative, multi-cultural, public-interest media would thrive. Across the country, an amazing variety of well-funded alternative media would emerge, both local and national, many non-commercial and nonprofit. In this new world, the privatized marketplace of ideas would become more of a public commons—a vibrant flowering garden, not the commercialized strip mall we currently endure.

"We go around with all this frustration over media. But most of us think it's just something that happens to us," explains Patty Allen, a labor activist who worked 23 years on an Oscar Mayer meatpacking line in Wisconsin and got turned on to media issues by Ralph Nader. "When I first heard Nader say that we own the airwaves and that we have a right to demand something better in return, I remember how liberating it felt. I was saying, 'Wow, now that I know this, what do I do? Where do I sign up? How can I demand a change?' I think there's a lot of people like me all over this country who are ready. But we need a sense that we're not just wasting our time."

Such a realization is critical to unleashing the sort of broad grassroots action that will finally make media a genuine and ongoing issue in America. Media need not be the enemy of our desires for democratic renewal in America. Media can be what Jefferson, Madison and especially the most visionary of our founders, Tom Paine, intended: the tool by which citizens ascertain the information they need to be the governors, not the governed. ■

This essay is adapted from Our Media, Not Theirs: The Democratic Struggle Against Corporate Media (Seven Stories Press).

The Holy Grail

The crusade for media reform

BY PAT AUFDERHEIDE

will face serious obstacles

It is wonderfully invigorating to read Bob McChesney and John Nichols' prose, which echoes many efforts I have covered and participated in over decades working with media reform advocates and activists.

McChesney and Nichols raise excellent points. Communications and media systems are the nervous system of our economy and our political systems. Moreover, they give us the background to our lived experience. No wonder media strongholds are well-guarded. Yes, we really need greater public support for communications and media systems that are more diverse and competitive than the ones we have today, as well as for vastly expanded public library systems and for public cyber-parks. And today we do lack our rallying calls for change. So far, so familiar.

McChesney and Nichols have an agenda, every point of which has been the focus of various media reform movements in the past.

It's all good, if backward-looking. Cable, Internet and wireless are transforming what we even mean by "media," so any future agenda would build on those majestic changes wrought by digital developments. But there are plenty of other good ideas out there and being acted on now to update the agenda.

What is unclear to me, although I would love it to be less so, is what swings a mass movement into wanting that agenda or anything like it. The Holy Grail of media reform, at least over the past 40 years, has been mobilizing the general public to want more than they are getting from their media. "More" usually means more of things that are good for them, and maybe even hard for them, not just more lowest-common-denominator junk. One friend of mine calls this the Sunday School approach to media reform—in the sense that it's always something you want other people to do while you're watching *Six Feet Under*.

This is where I think the big challenges are: developing shared visions in our media and our communications systems of what's possible, what we want, what we and our kids deserve. If I had the answer, I'd just tell you. I am pretty sure I haven't yet seen shared visions that mobilize taxpayers across their many political and cultural differences. And I'm not even surprised at that. Consider some of the rough patches where media reform has tripped up in the past:

What's public anyway? It's easy to complain about *The O'Reilly Factor* and Rush Limbaugh. It's hard to develop models for new electronic public spaces—non-commercial spaces where something other than the market (something like ideology) determines the content. Do you want your tax dollars going to fund (fill in the blank for noxious cause here)? Does your brother-in-law? We still need to wrangle that concept of publicness into a form that makes sense for people who really disagree with each other.

Oh great, another cause. In the '80s, we used to say, "Media is everybody's second-favorite issue." All the national constituency groups (and I've been around many, many tables where McChesney and Nichols' list of potential allies were all represented) basically told us, "We're too busy fighting poverty/racism/police brutality/union-busting/disability discrimination; you fight this issue and let us know."

Too much stuff. It's hard to tell people that in a world of 450 digital channels of television, several national elite newspapers, way too many magazines and newsletters, 21-screen cineplexes, on-demand radio, and all of the World Wide Web that they don't have media choices. The "GE to GM" phrase just doesn't jibe with most people's sense of their options. Yes, cable only reaches two-thirds of the population. Yes, people in rural areas have fewer radio stations. Yes, there is a lot of same-old dreck. But the experience of most people is more about David Schenk's great phrase "data smog" than it is about lack and loss.

Who wants it? We have trouble pointing to any public appetite for more disturbing, thoughtful, challenging public affairs, even among communities of shared values. Look at the anemic state of all "alternative" or left publishing. It may be important to have, but is it the stuff of a mass movement?

Where's the harm? We have great difficulty showing, or even knowing, what the consequences of communications and media arrangements are. That's partly because of the limits of social science. There is no way to neatly disentangle media effects from other ones. Look at decades of inconclusive studies on TV violence. It's also because the real action in media policy is on the bleeding edge of technology, where all the consequences are hypothetical. What are the implications of monopoly control of broadband? The official rejection of open broadband—which would have permitted competition—was

made in an environment where perhaps 5 percent of Internet users had it.

Blowback alert. People love to complain about crap on TV. But some of them hate homosexuality in sit-coms, and they're easily mobilized. We want structural change, not content control.

Building an ideological platform takes time, as conservatives learned, and it can't be done just by fulminating and denouncing. There are messy issues when you're dealing with the basic machinery of culture. Taking a page from the conservatives (as well as environmentalists), we could develop think tanks that work through ideological issues and do real research, and that build press relations with key journalists. We could cultivate tomorrow's opinion-makers today, at high schools, colleges and universities. We can learn from a rich history of media reform.

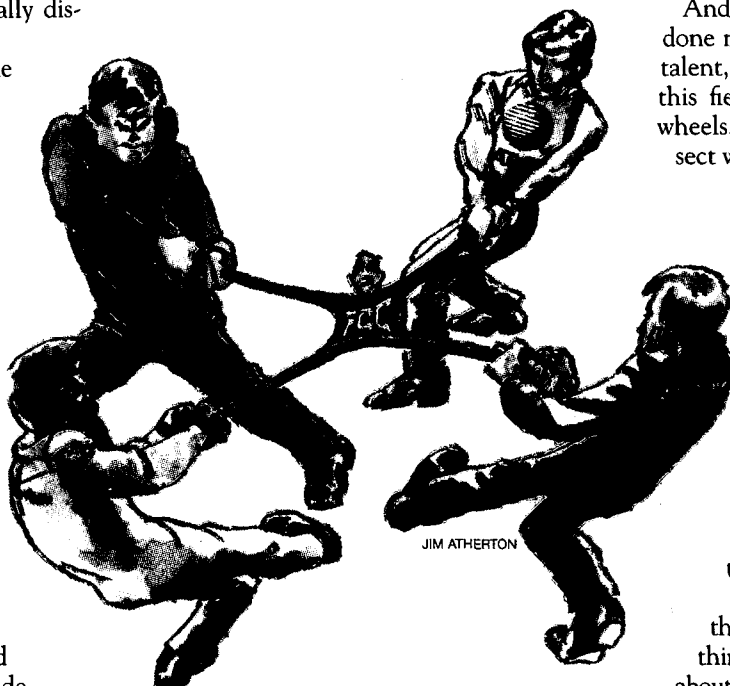
And in fact, some of that is being done now. Let's take advantage of the talent, energy and good work already in this field, and let's not reinvent any wheels. Public demand needs to intersect with the trench warfare for structural regulation—at the agencies and standards bodies, in Congress, in the courts, at public utility and public service commissions. This crucial work will not happen through mass organizing. It requires an enormous amount of technical and legal competence.

Don't forget, the big guys not only have their political lobbyists, they also have their economists, their engineers and their computer geeks.

Inside the Beltway, where I live, there is a stunning group of mini think tanks with deep knowledge about the economics and politics of media. Most of them have a savvy sense

of the complexities of communications policy, work with key stakeholders and regularly assemble coalitions for targeted campaigns. At Public Knowledge, Gigi Sohn is developing a network of arts organizations to support progressive intellectual property policies. At the Center for Digital Democracy, Jeffrey Chester is organizing stakeholders in communities across the nation to demand access to digital bandwidth on cable. In many research universities, exciting programs using new media have been launched. Projects are brewing in law schools and universities, including a joint project between my Center for Social Media and the Independent TV Service (itself a media reform victory) to write a policy primer for media artists. These projects connect constituencies with action.

As digital developments smudge the line between media (yesterday, our TVs) and communication (yesterday, our phones), the question of how we build systems for a democratic future is a big one. Deepening the public's knowledge base about the underpinnings of our communications is good. Mapping the exciting landscape of communications policy projects is important. And the successes and failures of media reform movements so far are worth a much closer look. McChesney and Nichols are walking in a well-worn trench with their rallying call. ■



Against All Odds

By Eugene McCarraher

Before he married and became a father, my cousin was a gambler man. A successful banker from Monday to Friday, he spent many a weekend in Atlantic City, where he cast his wealth like a votive offering to the glittering shrines of Fortuna. (Slot machines and roulette wheels were his favorite sites

of devotion.) Though perennially broke, this Reaganaut champion of Wall Street and the Pentagon returned from the games as hopeful as ever. (He also invested and lost a pile in the euphoric "new economy.")

Something for Nothing: Luck in America

By Jackson Lears

Viking

392 pages, \$27.95

was a gambler?" Lears beckons toward and occasionally enters an uncharted realm of cultural criticism. In every roll of the dice, he sees a question posed to the unknown—and maybe beneficent—forces of the universe. It's a view we'd do well to consider as we face a future in which imperial violence is a cruel terrestrial certainty.

As any of his readers and students (like myself) could tell you, Lears has spent his entire career addressing the moral and religious issues at the heart of our cultural history. His first book, *No Place of Grace* (1981), traced the emergence of "antimodernism" in

industrial capitalism, the more sensitive and articulate members of the Northeastern bourgeoisie feared the corrosive impact of rationalization, secularization and technological development—the trinity of "disenchantment" identified by Max Weber.

Unable to allay their distress by embracing Protestant verities, an array of Victorian malcontents—epitomized by William James, Vida Scudder and Henry Adams—embarked on quests for moral meaning that held a twofold historical significance. On the one hand, Lears argued, the arts and crafts revival, the resurgence of medievalist fantasy, and interest in Catholic religious culture voiced a powerful dissent from capitalist modernity. On the other hand, when severed from politics and religious tradition, they fostered therapeutic forms of cultural authority for an emerging elite of managers, professionals and other experts. When bereft of moral and spiritual ideals other than "release from inhibitions"—the

Victorian precursor to the conquest of cool—Lears argued that antimodernism could be "more easily accommodated to newer, more permissive modes of cultural hegemony."

Though indebted to the Marxist cultural theory of Antonio Gramsci and Raymond Williams, Lears' sympathetic account of Anglo-Catholicism also marked respect for the critical power of religion. Indeed, from the book's title (taken from T.S. Eliot's "Ash Wednesday") to its last line—"Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief," from the Gospel of Mark—he suggested that the left could not dismiss religious faith as simply or ultimately reactionary. Even more than Christopher Lasch—then beginning his journey from

Marxism and psychoanalysis to populism and Protestant theology—Lears saw religion as a treasury of hope, not part of a past that lay like nightmare.

In *Fables of Abundance* (1994), a cultural history of American advertising, Lears ventured further into religious matters. Far more than an instrument of hege-



late-Victorian America. Alluding to "signs of spiritual sterility" and "moral hollowiness" in the contemporary West, Lears looked to an older WASP elite for the sources of both the malady and the cure. Among the prime beneficiaries of

You sound more like a mystic than a capitalist, I remarked. "What's the difference?" he replied. Though his fondness for casinos has abated, he makes an occasional pilgrimage back to the one-armed bandits, and he plays the stock market even after the dot-com crash.

As Jackson Lears might observe, my cousin embodies the conflicted convictions about grace, luck and fortune that have pervaded American culture. In his wide-ranging, big-hearted and brilliant new book, Lears probes the ambivalence Americans have shown toward the masterless world of chance, from sacred bundles and faro banks to atonal music and abstract expressionism. But *Something for Nothing* is much more than a capacious piece of scholarship. Asking, like Ralph Ellison's invisible man, "What if history

mony, advertising, Lears contended, reflects a larger conflict between the “disembodiment of abundance”—processes of production that foster dualistic and aggressive human relations to nature—and an “animistic,” “magical,” “carnival-esque” sensibility that affords a more pleasurable and harmonious “way of being in the world.” By enlisting the magical in a commodified, utilitarian conception of the good life, advertising affirms utopian hopes while effectively disarming them.

Seeking a “sensuous place of grace,” a “reanimation of the world” that reunites work and play, Lears discovered portents in an “aesthetic of the outmoded” exemplified in the assemblages of Kurt Schwitters and Joseph Cornell. Out of the refuse of commodity civilization, these artists crafted what Cornell called a “clearing”—a realm of enchantment, a state of joy in which the ordinary things of everyday life resonate with extraordinary, perhaps spiritual significance.

Lears enters that “clearing” in *Something for Nothing*. He finds in American history a persistent and evolving tension between a “culture of control”—belief in diligence, perseverance and the rational mastery of self and nature—and a “culture of chance,” exemplified most broadly in gambling, which respects the indeterminacy, randomness and prodigality of life. While conceding the need for security and achievement, Lears bristles at “the arrogance of the meritocratic myth” that justifies inequality, panders to dreams of human omnipotence, and lames any will to generosity. Without romanticizing the (often calamitous) play of chance, Lears affirms those who “treat it as a source of knowledge and a portal of possibility,” even, he writes, as a channel of grace, which “happens when openness to chance ... yields spiritual insight.”

Lears opens with a Cook’s tour of pre-modern cultures of chance, from the Yoruba and the Senegambians of West Africa (who say that “evil travels in straight lines”) to medieval Catholics and renegade Protestants. Pervaded by what anthropologists call *mana*—a spiritual energy that dwells in matter—the peoples of these enchanted worlds used a host of objects to conjure good fortune or foretell the future: cowrie shells, palm nuts, diviner’s bags, altarcloths (or

Godwebbe), the Eucharistic host. In whatever form, *mana* meant both material abundance (Fortuna often carried a cornucopia) and a fluid conception of personality that obscured the lines between self and world. Far from being “prisoners of fate,” cultures of chance were and remain more inclined to trust in the basic goodness of the universe.

Despite its notion of Providence, even Christianity, especially in its Catholic form, contained a culture of chance. While theologians dismissed luck (though here I think Lears exaggerates the dualism of ancient and medieval theology), sacramental ritual and popular religious culture converted pagan enchantment. But Calvinist Protestants

From the Yoruba of West Africa to medieval Catholics, cultures of chance—far from being ‘prisoners of fate’—were more inclined to trust in the basic goodness of the universe.

rejected sacramental mediation, and their disenchanted insistence on immutable Providence—secularized, gradually, into the laws of nature and the market—inaugurated the modern culture of control. Still, most English Protestants who invaded America were not Puritan Calvinists, and so European vestiges of belief in *mana*, together with the conjuring and divinatory customs of Native Americans and African slaves, composed the earliest post-Columbian culture of chance.

Before the American Revolution, the two cultures formed an uneasy stalemate. Farmers and artisans, goodwives and slaves—“the people most exposed to fortune’s slings and arrows”—adhered to an “ethic of fortune” that violated Protestant orthodoxy. African and Caribbean slaves combined Christianity and voodoo;

whites traded in coffin spoons, pored over dream books, said the Lord’s Prayer backward to ward off rain. Not a few rich folks, like the Virginia planter William Byrd, reflected on dreams and consulted fortune tellers. The colonial culture of chance was most visible and subversive in the “recreational conjuring” of gambling. Horse races, cockfights and rounds of loo in local taverns were occasions for “promiscuous mingling of men and women, blacks and whites, rich boys and ruffians.” As a result, colonial moralists denounced not only the persistence of paganism, but the carnivalesque erasure of class, race and gender boundaries.

Those boundaries were not and have not been entirely fluid, however. While women and non-whites have played central roles in conjuring and fortune-telling, gambling has remained largely, in Lears’ words, “a *herrenvolk* democracy, for white males only.” Lears makes clear that the cultures of control and chance have also been rival cultures of masculinity. Especially in the South, the willingness to wager enormous sums has marked one kind of male identity. Against manhood as extravagant risk, the culture of control began to pose, in the early 1800s, the “self-made” man, the diligent achiever, a species whose evolutionary tree runs from the Victorian entrepreneur to the workaholic professional.

This new and more aggressive culture of control had emerged by the 1820s and reigned supreme after the Civil War. The 19th-century culture of control fused the Enlightenment’s instrumental reason, liberal individualism and an evangelical Protestant rhetoric of Providence—“evangelical rationality,” as Lears dubs the disenchanted trinity. Denying accident and tracing success to rigorous self-discipline, evangelical reason legitimated capitalist enterprise and social inequality as results of providential order. Evangelical moralists such as Anthony Comstock identified “progress” with the will of God and denounced reliance on chance, especially gambling, as a loss of self-control.

Meanwhile, the culture of chance deflected and absorbed the evangelical-entrepreneurial order. African-Americans retained belief in herbs and conjuring (Frederick Douglass hinted that a charmed root had stiff-

ened his fighting spirit in his brawl with a master), and Roman Catholic immigrants, from Irish gamblers to Mexican devotees of Santeria, held on to sacraments, charms and holy cards. (Lears notes that black Protestants and Catholics exchanged elements of their cultures of chance well into the 1930s.) At the same time, the evangelical dispensation was also "the golden age of gambling." Stung by moralists, gamblers tried to clean house by distinguishing between "true sportsmen" who respected Fortuna and "sharpers," "con men" and other miscreants who rigged the games of chance.

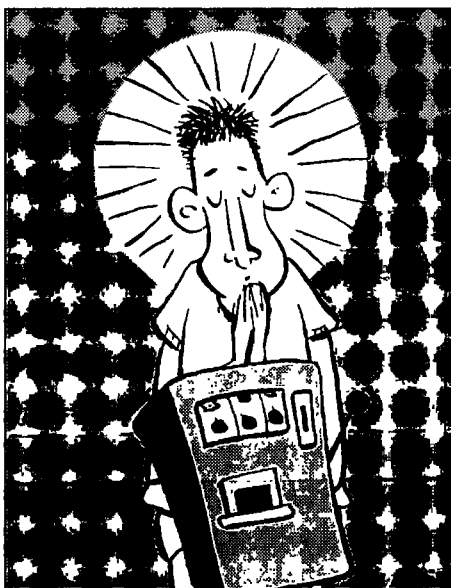
Moreover, by the 1850s, gamblers had assimilated much of the commercial ethos of American society. Most of the vivid portraits Lears draws—of Robert Bailey, "Canada Bill" Jones, Doc Holliday, "Pittsburgh Phil" Smith, to name a few—illustrate this nexus of spirit, sport and brash commercialism. But Lears also contends that riverboat gambling in particular evoked "a timeless, parallel universe of play" in which "all men were equal in the eyes of Fortuna."

As its theological framework eroded between the Civil War and World War I, evangelical rationality became "managerial rationality," in which corporate elites and Progressive reformers espoused the mantras of efficiency and pragmatism. The devotees of managerial reason even found ways to mathematize and incorporate chance into reliable schemes of prediction and mastery, of which John von Neumann's "game theory" was the most prominent. Through their firm commitment to the rhetoric of progress, contemporary celebrants of chaos and risk envision a world in which we are all "choosing to do what we had to do, anyway"—a command economy of choice.

Against managerial reason, Lears poses a 20th-century culture of chance that embraced a motley communion of saints. We meet Gypsies; Damon Runyon's Sky Masterson, for whom "dollars may as well be doughnuts"; William James, "our greatest philosopher of chance," who relished things, as he put it, "on which we have no effective claim"; Ralph Ellison, whose invisible man thwarts managerial reason through "the improvised life"; Paul Tillich, who affirmed redemption through the "holy waste" of self-giving without calculation; John Cage and his Zen-inspired

"aesthetic of accident"; and a host of surrealists, expressionists and economic heretics like Harlem Pete, whose fine and careless wisdom—"if you want to be rich, Give! If you want abundance, Scatter!"—both recalled the Sermon on the Mount and inverted the logic of accumulation.

In such an expansive study, there are bound to be lapses and disappointments. Lears paints so vast a canvas that he sometimes loses his focus on gambling. To my mind, this isn't a problem, but it might be to more fastidious (not to say pedantic) readers. Surprisingly, though, his canvas doesn't depict Las Vegas, which might have



offered a case study in the postwar persistence of both commercialized and spiritual cultures of chance.

What might be the future of the culture of chance? In his epilogue, Lears dwells less on gambling and more on postmodern architecture—freedom "comes from somewhere else," he quotes Frank Gehry, "and that somewhere else is the place I'm interested in"—and the decentering of humanity in ecological consciousness. He turns finally to the work of Emmanuel Levinas, and concludes that what he calls the philosopher's "ethic of grace"—an acknowledgement of a powerless Other that constitutes a "gratuitous love"—is our strongest defense against the delusions of managerial rationality.

Yet while "gratuitous love" is a powerful form of moral imagination, one could

argue that it's just a frail human gesture without some ontological grounding. Lears himself realizes this—writing of Levinas, he notes a "theology of grace" as well as an ethic—but he leaves this insight undeveloped. Of course, Lears the historian isn't required to write theology. Moreover, given the secular mindset of academia—one that's much more managerialist than (even leftist) academics care to admit—it's a safe bet that theologizing would elicit howls of derisive laughter. Still, while Lears is already pushing it by even mentioning grace, it's precisely that display of intellectual courage that's both provocative and frustrating. If, as Lears clearly implies, we need fresh forms of cultural criticism, then what new cards can he put on the table if grace is the object of the game?

On occasion, Lears shows his hand. The "accidental gestures" of modernism could, he asserts, become "a way of conjuring mana," a way into "the flow of primal plenitude," a "fleeting experience of grace." Later, when writing of Joyce's "epiphanies" and Proust's *moments bienheureux*, Lears christens them "secular experiences of grace." To put it squarely, does Lears believe in grace? And if so, from where does this bountiful stream originate? These are not just "religious" questions, for if, as he rightly says of environmentalism, "the preservation of a place of grace could be a profoundly political act," then we need to know what sort of politics comes from a graceful view of the world.

As I write this review, the Iraqi people are about to be victims of a graceless and horrific act, a bloody convergence of evangelical and technocratic forms of the culture of control. While most opposition to this impending evil is voiced in a secular idiom, I grew more convinced while reading Lears' book that only an "ethics and theology of grace" can counter our manic and lethal gospel of mastery. Given the power of what C. Wright Mills once called the managerial demiurge, such a hope would seem against all odds.

But if Lears is right, reliance on grace could be amazing. ■

Eugene McCarragher teaches humanities at Villanova University. He is working on *The Enchantments of Mammon: Corporate Capitalism and the American Moral Imagination*.

Stranger than Fiction

By Jody Kolodzey

A few days after her 24th birthday in April 1939, Billie Holiday wandered into the Commodore Music Shop, a record store on East 42nd Street in New York, "very unhappy," as proprietor Milt Gabler later recalled. In those days, record stores also functioned as recording stu-

Strange Fruit
Directed by Joel Katz
PBS

dios, and Holiday was interested in seeing "Strange Fruit," which was fast becoming her signature song, immortalized on wax.

Holiday already had a record label—the big and prestigious Columbia—but the company wouldn't touch this number. "Strange Fruit" is about lynching, and Columbia executives refused to chance a retaliatory loss of sales from record buyers in the South. They were, Holiday told Gabler, "afraid" of the song.

The recording Gabler made of Holiday singing "Strange Fruit" became a huge hit, reaching No. 16 by July 1939. Due in part to its unprecedented popularity—never before had a protest song made it onto the Billboard charts—"Strange Fruit" is credited with a major role in raising white consciousness for the nascent civil rights movement.

The song, its history and its impact are explored in Joel Katz's remarkable 2002 documentary, *Strange Fruit*, which has been making the rounds of the film festival circuit for the past year and debuts on PBS on April 8. The hour-long film explores the interplay between popular culture and social change, and includes interviews with Gabler, Pete Seeger, Amiri Baraka and Josh White Jr., whose dad got into a minor tiff with Holiday over his performing the song until he convinced her that she shouldn't be so proprietary about it, that more people needed to hear it sung.

"Strange Fruit" was written by Abel Meeropol, a white Jewish schoolteacher

from the Bronx. Meeropol, active in both the Communist Party and the formidable Local 5 of the New York Teachers Union, composed the song in 1935 in response to a lynching photograph he had seen. The lyrics were originally published in the January 1937 issue of *The New York Teacher*, a union magazine. After Holiday began a regular gig at the Greenwich Village nightclub Cafe Society in December 1938,

weave in and out of the narration and provide the film with its backbone. At its heart is a clip of Holiday performing the song for BBC television in 1958, looking dignified yet immeasurably fragile, her voice strong and clear, with a calculated restraint that suffuses the material with more raw power than a purely emotional rendering would. This was less than nine months before her death from drug abuse.

"Strange Fruit" is written in the key of C minor, the key that Albert Lavignac codified in his 1905 classic tome, *La musique et les musiciens*, as emblematic of "the gloomy, the dramatic, the violent." Those are all good words to describe the song; so is stark. It begins:

Southern trees bear a strange fruit
Blood on the leaves and blood
at the root
Black body swinging in the
Southern breeze
Strange fruit hanging from
the poplar trees

And it ends:

Here is a fruit for the crows to
pluck
For the rain to gather, for the
wind to suck
For the sun to rot, for the tree to
drop
Here is a strange and bitter crop

Holiday typically performed the song as a finale, in a hushed and completely dark house, with a single spotlight focused on her face. No food or drinks were sold or served during the number, and there was no encore after it.

The film closes with a list of all the singers who have recorded "Strange Fruit" since Holiday, and with the invocation of some other names: James Byrd Jr., Matthew Sheppard, Amadou Diallo—men whose recent killings serve as nasty reminders that such crimes are still with us, that only the faces and the voices have changed. But in the end, "Strange Fruit" is a hymn to the power of music to bring people together across the boundaries of race, religion, culture, geography and time. ■

Jody Kolodzey is a journalist and ethnomusicologist in Philadelphia.



Abel Meeropol, composer of "Strange Fruit."

Meeropol brought the song to her. She embraced it immediately.

Meeropol registered "Strange Fruit" under the pseudonym "Lewis Allan," a conflation of the names of his two biological sons, who were stillborn. In retrospect, it seems an ironic tribute, given that Meeropol is perhaps best known today for adopting the sons of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, American Communists who were executed on June 19, 1953, for allegedly supplying atomic bomb plans to the Soviet Union.

Interviews with Michael and Robert Meeropol, now middle-aged activists,

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Dear Mr. Vonnegut,

What on earth happened to American journalists so that they let fanatics toy with them?

Andrés Hoyos, Bogotá, Colombia

Dear Andrés,

They became rich and famous.
Kurt

What words of hope and encouragement do you offer your daughter that other parents might borrow?

Sharon Tiplady
Palmer, Alaska

Dear Sharon,

"Know that I will always adore you, dear Lily, and please look both ways before crossing a street."

Kurt

I'd love to know your thoughts for a woman of 43 who is finally ready to have children but is wary of bringing new lives into such a frightening world.

Elizabeth Gratch
Ypsilanti, Michigan

Dear Elizabeth,

Don't do it! It could be another George W. Bush or Lucrezia Borgia.

The kid would be lucky to be born into a society where even the poor people are overweight, but unlucky to be in one without a national health plan or decent public education for most, where lethal injection and warfare are forms of entertainment, and where it costs an arm and a leg to go to college. This would not be the case if the kid were a Canuck or Swede or Limey or Frog or Kraut. So either go on practicing safe sex or emigrate.

Kurt

Does the act of writing or painting somehow balance out or put off the monstrous acts staining our collective history?

Rick Stoeckel
Chicago

Dear Rick,

You betcha! Same way a hot fudge sundae cures the clap!

Kurt

I am a 19-year-old Harvard University freshman, and I hope you take the time to respond to this message because I know it speaks to a large bracket of the silent youth in our country.

Amidst the jaded, tough-guy rhetoric of our country's leadership, I am constantly reminded that I am an important part of "the future of America." But I don't want to be part of the America that the Bush-Cheney-Rumsfeld-Wolfowitz axis is leading us toward. How can more war lead to more peace? How can arrogance and active ignorance make friends?

As a young person, I love the fact that my future is wide open and uncharted. But adults often say that idealism is for dreamers. I refuse to accept this, but in a country run by people who think "idealism" is synonymous with "radicalism," I often wonder: Is there realism in idealism?

Young people today have no spiritual leader like Martin Luther King Jr. to revere. We have tuned out because America's leadership has tuned us out. Politicians don't speak to us or to our issues, and yet we are the ones who will inherit the world they leave

us with. Where can we find hope? I know it's there, but where has the idealism gone?
So it goes.

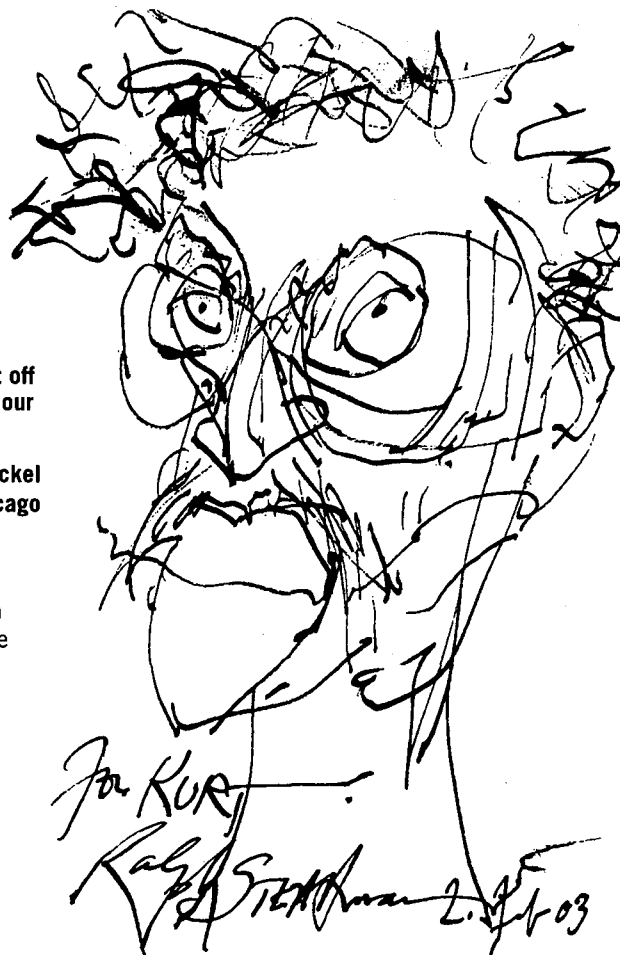
Seamus McKiernan
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Dear Seamus,

Thank goodness you're not at Yale, which is completely walled off, along with Skull and Bones, from the working stiffs. It so happens that idealism enough for anyone is not made of perfumed pink clouds. It is the law! It is the U.S. Constitution.

Kurt

Got a question for Mr. Vonnegut? Write to vonnegut@inthesetimes.com.



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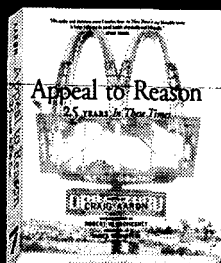
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When her teacher noted her seemingly innate ability to photograph children, she suggested that Stummer go to the Children's Aid Society on the Lower East Side to practice. Stummer took her advice. "I remember standing in the doorway of the Society one day in June 1976 and seeing all this chaos, the children running in and out of tenements and abandoned buildings," she recalls. "There was tremendous energy."

Still, Stummer knew that she would need to sharpen her street smarts. "A short time before I got to the Lower East Side, the *New York Times* ran a piece about the block the Children's Aid Society was on, East 6th between Avenues C and D. The article called it 'the meanest street in America.' I was scared to death walking around," Stummer admits. "I kept expecting something bad to happen. But I once read that if you don't take risks, you'll never do anything meaningful. That was the mantra I kept repeating."

Not surprisingly, difficulties developed. The first pictures Stummer shot were so blurry, they were unrecognizable. "My hands would literally shake from fear," she says. Eventually, Stummer learned to increase the shutter speed on her camera, which fixed the problem. She also got to know the residents of the community.

"I made friends," she says. "I'd show up once a week, week after week. I'd see children playing, and I'd photograph them. The next week I'd return with copies of the pictures. At first, the mothers' reaction was flat, as if they did not want them. I couldn't understand it until someone said, 'no dinero.' I was then able to explain that I didn't want money. I wanted them to have the prints. That was when my work started to be well-received."

Stummer photographed the Lower East Side until 1980, when a wrong turn landed her in the middle of Newark, New Jersey, a city whose squalor rivaled Lower Manhattan's. Although Stummer had been born in Newark in 1936, she had not been there in decades, and the poverty she saw stunned her. She began to wander around, meeting people from a neighborhood coalition working to better the community.

One particular edifice—the Irvine Turner Building—grabbed her attention. "I don't know what it was but there was something electric about the place," says Stummer. "I photographed it for 15 years, until it was demolished in 1998 following a fire. Some of the residents were there the whole time, and I photographed their children growing up and then having their own children. I'm still in touch with some of them."

Although Stummer took thousands of pictures of the Turner building—the results became *No Easy Walk: Newark 1980-1993*, a photo essay published by Temple University Press in 1994—as her relationship with the residents developed, she felt compelled to move beyond documentation into advocacy.

"I'd go inside the apartments and see wires hanging or a ceiling coming down," she recalls. "I'd take photos and show them to the

Violations Bureau. The residents had been complaining about these conditions for months or years, but nothing had changed. Then I come in—a white outsider—and I scream that these conditions are an abomination and the building gets fixed. That changed me, seeing how powerless the poor are. Sure, the residents received a lot of help because of me, but it continues to be a reciprocal relationship. People open up their homes and tell me their stories. I then educate others about conditions in the ghetto. I try to bring reality into the mix, to challenge the idea that people get what they deserve. I help people see that everyone wants the same things: to be warm, housed, fed, clothed and educated. I show audiences the injustice of having nothing."

Although Stummer has a long-term commitment to Newark, her work has taken her beyond the Garden State. A 1984 marriage—her third—brought her to Brooklin, Maine, where her spouse had a cabin. "We no longer have the house, but in those years I'd go up there, to paradise, and be bored. So I started looking around and discovered HOME, a group affiliated with the Christian Emmaus movement: Homeworkers Organized for More Employment. They build low-income housing, run literacy classes, sponsor a food bank, and run emergency shelters and a child-care center. I took photographs that they used on a calendar and helped with fundraising."

In the '90s, HOME began to assist Guatemalan refugees living in the United States. They also established a program to build schools, homes and health centers in the Guatemalan town of Comalapa. Stummer went to Comalapa in 1997 and took photos of the people she worked alongside. "I've always been an underdog, so no matter where I go I try to photograph people respectfully," Stummer says.

Indeed, she credits the hardships she has faced—being raised by a vindictive, alcoholic grandmother; getting pregnant in 1952, when she was 16, and putting the baby up for adoption; and entering into one forced and one loveless marriage—for sensitizing her to the struggles of others.

"My work is part of a long tradition," she says. "Like Lewis Hine, Ansel Adams, Dorothea Lange and Jacob Riis, I photograph injustice. I try to force people to see a world they close their eyes to."

For her efforts Stummer has received both accolades and sibilations. A 1986 exhibit to celebrate Newark's history was pulled because the photos were deemed "too hard to look at," and audiences have repeatedly questioned her subject matter. Nonetheless, Stummer's work is in the permanent collections of museums across the country, and she has been widely exhibited. The Library of Congress acquired 24 Stummer photos in 2002.

She has also won numerous awards, most recently a 2003 New Jersey State Council on the Arts Fellowship. Although Stummer retired from teaching workshops in 2000, she continues to photograph Newark and speak out against inequality. "I have a persistent personality," she quips. "I just keep going back. Even when I feel impotent or when the line between city and suburb seems huge, I know I need to continue to acknowledge reality and present what I see." ■

'My work
is part of a
long tradition.
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injustice.
I try to force
people to see
the world
they close
their eyes to.'



terrible beauty

By Eleanor J. Bader

helen M. Stummer has been called the Dorothea Lange of our time. As a chronicler of contemporary poverty, for decades she has photographed the poor, from New York City to rural Maine to Comalapa, Guatemala.

"There is something about communities that are invisible and ignored that resonates with me," she says. "I would love to take pictures of pretty things, but when I see someone struggling, living with dignity under harsh conditions, it activates me and I pick up my camera. Injustice—poverty—gets my juices moving; I take photos as a way of dealing with my rage."

Stummer's nearly 30-year career began in 1976. A suburban New Jersey single mother, she was going to college and working as a bookkeeper. "I was an artist, a painter," she says, "and I decided to take a beginning photography class at the International Center for Photography in Manhattan. I felt I needed to learn to take pictures of things I wanted to paint."

continued on page 29 >>>